

Sight & Sound

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE



December 11

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RACHEL WEISZ IN
TERENCE DAVIES'S

THE DEEP BLUE SEA

PLUS

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Andrea Arnold's punk Brontë

MICHAEL SHANNON

senses the end in "Take Shelter"

THE TIN DRUM

returns in a longer cut

SNOWTOWN

A grisly Aussie breakthrough

ALEKSANDR SOKUROV

*takes on Goethe's 'Faust'*EVERY NEW
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REVIEWED

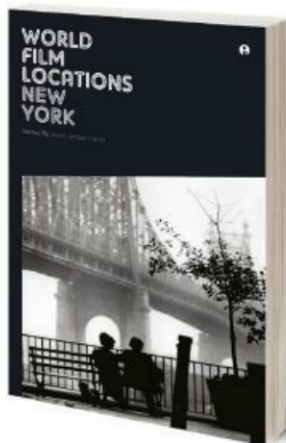
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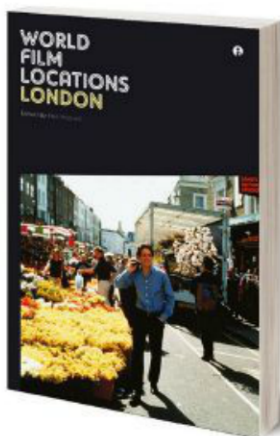
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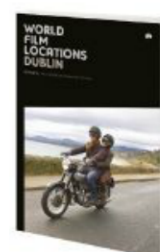
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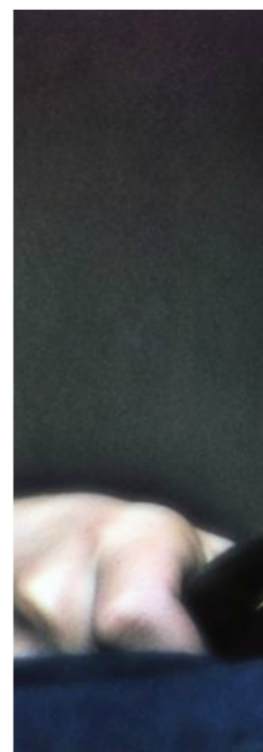
Paul Tickell is currently developing a feature documentary on Kraftwerk

COVER

Rachel Weisz in 'The Deep Blue Sea'

Next issue
on sale
29 November

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PLUS set report by **Nick James**

PLUS Rising star Tom Hiddleston

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Welcome. There's a Teutonic theme to this month's issue, as Johannes Zeiler takes on the key role in German literature in Aleksandr Sokurov's Golden Lion-winner *Faust* (far left, and p.38), while the adaptation of another key text, *The Tin Drum*, returns in a new extended cut (left, and p.42). Even that most British of filmmakers, Terence Davies, has turned to German DP Florian Hoffmeister to give an appropriately melancholic sheen to *The Deep Blue Sea* (p.18), his vision of doomed love in 1950s London. Equally ravishing are the Yorkshire moors, as photographed by Robbie Ryan for Andrea Arnold's glowering *Wuthering Heights* (p.34). After that double dose of *amour fou*, plus the redoubtable Michael Shannon pushed to the brink in *Take Shelter* (p.46) and grisly serial killings in Australia's *Snowtown* (p.32), what better to lighten the mood than Gene Kelly singing Gershwin in *An American in Paris*. 'S marvellous! **Nick James**

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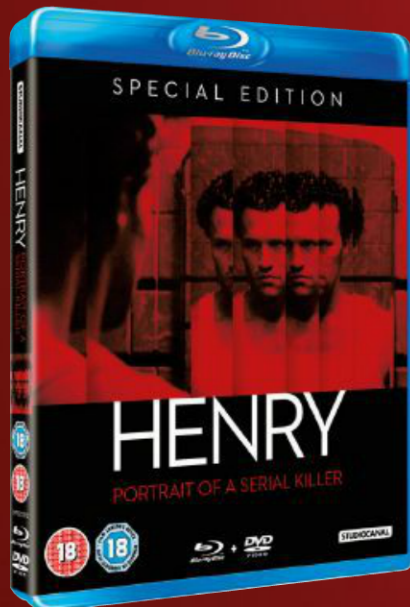
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NICK JAMES BACK TO MONOCHROME



Walking past the Royal Opera House recently, I noticed a tourist taking a picture of his family with the camera in his iPad. Without even looking at his screen, I could tell he was using the Hipstamatic app that gives a picture the patina of old 1970s colour

photos. This kind of instant nostalgic 'authenticity' may be part of the death kick of postmodernity as a cultural force, but it sure is popular.

The look of old still photos has, of course, its constant equivalent in cinema, and it's a regular part of the cinematographer's job to look for a past filmic feel. For instance Florian Hoffmeister, the cinematographer of *The Deep Blue Sea* (which was shot on film), talks in this issue about finding old lenses to get a particular look (see p.23). The new situation, though, is that there are digital ways of producing an extraordinary variety of looks that have little to do with any originating filmstock – and all at the push of a button.

I've conjectured before that moving-image cameras of the future will likely have a 'wind-up 16mm Bolex' setting for that true early-1960s avant-garde black-and-white documentary look. But there's a built-in contradiction to our fascination with old formats. Partly we like the sense of funky realism that, say, super 8 gives, but on the other hand, being of a certain time, the grunge is also glamourising, and tends towards the unreality of dreams. All of these considerations are brought more sharply into play when a film is made in black and white, as two of my favourite films this year have been.

Michel Hazanavicius's *The Artist* is in monochrome because it's a direct pastiche of Hollywood's silent era, whereas with Béla Tarr's *The Turin Horse* it's because Tarr believes that b&w is "more colourful than colour". A catalogue note for *The Turin Horse* talks about b&w "adding to the [film's] sense of isolation and nihilism" – which is one way of saying it's strictly for the arty films. But if you go back to when colour was first supplanting b&w as the default stock, there were lots of rearguard arguments against it. Orson Welles was particularly forthright, claiming: "It's the actor's friend... Because every performance is better in black and white."

Though to most people *The Artist* is an entertaining return to more direct and innocent cinematic pleasures, there are those who turn up their noses at the very idea of its pastiche. Indeed, some critics view it as a travesty to seem to revere the silent era (Hazanavicius has said that his favourite directors

are from that time), and yet to do so using modern digital technology. Nothing better illustrates how the use of b&w tends to attract attitudes not only of nostalgia, but also of snobbery and philistinism.

When *The White Ribbon* won the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 2009, there was a brief flurry of debate caused by media pundit Mark Lawson's remark in *The Guardian* that b&w is "the throwback tone of cinema". Michael Haneke's film, Lawson claimed, "conforms to the belief among filmmakers that black-and-white stock lends historical authenticity". The thing is, those filmmakers are quite right – as is shown by the popular use of old format looks.

But it's more complicated than that. The use of b&w is a tradition that just won't die (and don't forget that in the silent era, perhaps 80 per cent of films were colour-tinted). Lawson himself admitted that some of the great filmmakers turn to b&w for their most emotionally committed films – Spielberg with *Schindler's List*, Scorsese with *Raging Bull* and Woody Allen with *Manhattan*. But the most telling flaw in his complaint was that b&w "can make a film seem

When colour was first replacing b&w, there were lots of rearguard arguments against it. Orson Welles claimed: 'Black and white is the actor's friend'

less realistic" – as if realism is the sole aim of cinema.

The fact that George Clooney's well-made new political-conspiracy thriller *The Ides of March* seems somehow less convincing than his b&w period piece *Good Night, and Good Luck* is just one instance where b&w gives us an enhancing distance from the material. Considering what Welles said about acting, we might also wonder if the decline in the movie star might be due to an excess of realism. After all, cinema is a space in which realism and the oneiric intermingle. Atom Egoyan has posited the idea that the very traditional language of cinema – master shot to mid-shot to close-up – might work so well because it's how we experience dreams. We don't (usually) dream in black and white, but the absence of colour gives us the freedom to move into another world.

Sight & Sound's number-one computer-games enthusiast (yes, even we have one) tells me that the highly rated you-are-the-detective-game *L.A. Noire* offers you the choice of playing the game in black and white, for extra *noir* authenticity. I look forward to a 3D *noir* in monochrome. I'm not saying let's get back to black and white – merely that the old formats are forever.



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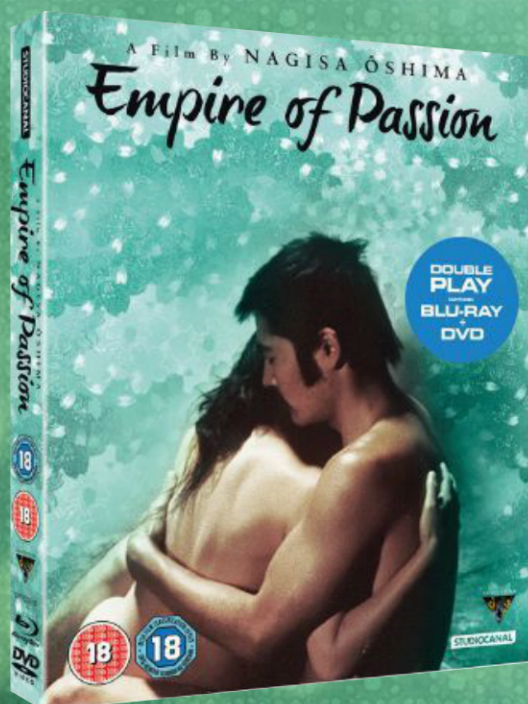
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THE BIGGER PICTURE



Earthly paradise

The 'poetic realism' movement in French cinema hit its heights with the films director Marcel Carné made in the late 1930s and early 1940s – titles such as 'Le Jour se lève' and 'Le Quai des brumes'. But it was never more sublime than in his 1945 masterpiece 'Les Enfants du paradis', shot during the Nazi occupation of France, but only premiered triumphantly after the Liberation. A dazzling recreation of the teeming Parisian theatre world of the 1830s and 40s, carried along by sparkling, witty

dialogue from Carné's regular screenwriter Jacques Prévert, it follows four men – an actor, a mime artist (Jean-Louis Barrault, above), a criminal and an aristocrat – all hopelessly besotted with the beautiful Garance (Arletty, right). Carné's film has never really gone away, but now, thanks to a 4K digital restoration by Pathé, its full achievements can once again be properly appreciated. The restoration plays at London's BFI Southbank and cinemas across the UK throughout November.



BFI STILLAS POSTERS AND DESIGNS (C)

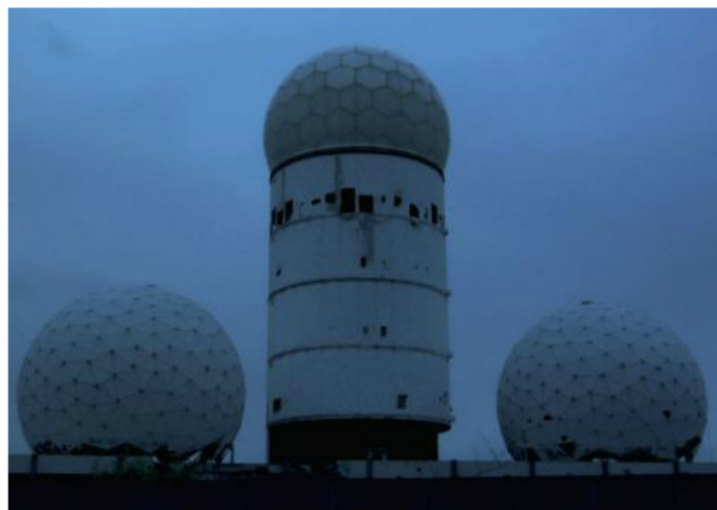
Sarajevo clash

Brian Dillon on the Albanian artist Anri Sala, whose intriguing work deliberately opens the filmed image to varied interpretations

1395 Days Without Red is a collaborative film project funded by Artangel and realised by the Bosnian artist Sejla Kamerić and the Albanian Anri Sala. Working with what is substantially the same footage, the artists have arrived at two discrete films that trace the fictional passage of a woman, played by Spanish actor Maribel Verdú, along Sarajevo's notorious 'sniper alley' – its mercilessly exposed main conduit – during the siege of 1992-96. (The title derives from citizens' efforts to make themselves inconspicuous to snipers.) In Sala's film, her anxious promenade is intercut with scenes of the Sarajevo Symphony Orchestra rehearsing Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. The conductor fusses over timing – "Tempo! Don't get behind!" – while the woman negotiates 11 potentially lethal road intersections on foot, at varying speeds.

1395 Days Without Red is only in part a stylised re-enactment of the fretful temporality of life under siege. For sure, Verdú is a ravishingly haunted presence, whether insinuating her way through grey crowds at a street corner or heaving, breathless, after running across an empty plaza. (Contemporary Sarajevo still looks ruined here, its streets muted and empty of traffic.) But Sala's film is as much about the competing and interlocking timescales involved in the woman's excursion and the orchestra's tentative performance. Punctuated by the sounds of gunshots or mortar fire, the woman's walk across the city has the air of a performance, too. And for all the memorial consolations of the symphony she hums loudly as she walks, the lasting impression is one of visual risk and propulsion – of Verdú, caught in an extremely narrow depth of field, flinging herself into the blur of the streets.

1395 Days Without Red is of a piece with much of Sala's earlier work in its overt concern with time and memory and its fascination with the idea of film as provisional enactment of a text or score that is open to interpretation. Here, Kamerić and Sala use the same journey and footage to different ends: Kamerić's film is slightly longer, and lingers visually and sonically on different details, containing none of the gunfire of



'Answer Me' is filmed inside one of three Buckminster Fuller geodesic domes – the ruins of a Berlin surveillance station

Sala's version, but contriving a more expansive soundtrack out of the texture of the city.

In 1998 Sala made *Finding the Words* (*Intervista*), based on footage of the artist's mother speaking at the 1977 Albanian Youth Conference. The accompanying sound had been lost, and Sala hired lipreaders to reconstruct her awkward ventriloquising of Communist Party dogma. And in *Why the Lion Roars* (2008) Sala deployed others' films as the raw material for a performance in which 50 features played according to the temperature outside the gallery, which ranged from -10°C to 40°C and led the films to alternate abruptly, even mid-screening. Time and again Sala's work seems to put what happens on screen in fragile intimacy with its conditions of exhibition.

The Artangel project screened in London this October at the same time as Sala's solo show opened at the Serpentine. The exhibition is a complex agglomeration of four films with related sculptural and performance works. In the Serpentine's east and west galleries respectively, *Le Clash* and *Tlatelolco Clash* present street-organ and music-box renditions of The Clash's 'Should I Stay or Should I Go' – or rather, fragmentary snatches of melody that only briefly cohere into a complete performance of the song. In *Le Clash*, speakers are hidden behind a fading mural of the dilapidated façade of the Salle des Fêtes in Bordeaux's Grand Parc, forming a literally resonant backdrop to Sala's protagonist's

wanderings with organ and music box. In *Tlatelolco Clash*, citizens feed fragments of punch-card scores into an organ in Mexico City's Tlatelolco Square, scene of a notorious massacre during the student protests of 1968. And in both galleries, the walls are perforated by punch-card patterns, allowing the sounds and scenery of Hyde Park to intrude on and rhyme with the films themselves.

This sense of the films expanding into sculptural presence is also clear in the central gallery, where saxophonists Andre Vida and Caroline Kraabel regularly accompany Sala's *Long Sorrow*, a film of free-jazz musician Jemeel Moondoc performing while suspended vertiginously outside an 18th-floor apartment in Berlin. *Long Sorrow* alternates with *Answer Me*, filmed inside one of the three Buckminster Fuller geodesic domes that comprise the ruins of Berlin's Teufelsberg Cold War-era surveillance station. Here, the echoing interior is filled by the sound of a young man drumming, drowning out a woman's voice. And up in the Serpentine's atrium gallery, the drummer's inaudible low frequencies trigger movement in a pair of drumsticks atop a snare drum (a recurring motif in Sala's recent installations). The whole, again, is testament to Sala's expansively rhythmical practice, his art of measured flight.

■ The Anri Sala exhibition runs at the Serpentine Gallery, London until 20 November

● **Shane Carruth** arrived out of nowhere back in 2005 with 'Primer', his fascinating, puzzling and hugely inventive micro-budget sci-fi debut, only to disappear just as promptly (apart from a rumoured project entitled 'A Topiary' and some effects work on 'Looper'). But word is that Carruth has written a new script entitled 'Upstream Colour', and is currently casting and due to shoot in 2012. Little is known about the story, but online speculation is that the title may refer to "an esoteric biopharmaceutical term that describes impurities present early in the processing/manufacture of a chemical".

● **Ben Wheatley** is to follow his highly acclaimed breakout second feature 'Kill List' with a black comedy entitled 'Sightseers'. The film has been written by its stars, Alice Lowe and Steve Oram, who play a couple who set out on a road trip around Britain intending to see its cultural and geographical glories, but instead encounter troublesome teenagers, yobs and other irritants.

● **Dustin Hoffman**, after nearly 50 years in the business, is to make his directorial debut with 'Quartet', based on Ronald Harwood's stage play of the same name. Hoffman has attracted the likes of Maggie Smith, Tom Courtenay, Billy Connolly, Michael Gambon, Pauline Collins and Sheridan Smith to star in a story about the residents of Beecham House, a home for retired opera singers, and the egos and temperaments that threaten to undermine a fundraising concert they plan to put on.

● **Andrew Köttig**, the British director of this issue's Film of the Month 'This Our Still Life' (see p.52), is at work on his next feature, 'Swandown': a travelogue that follows Köttig and the writer Iain Sinclair as they take a swan pedalo from the coast of Hastings to Hackney in London. Along the way the pair meet a number of invited guests, among them Stewart Lee, Alan Moore and Dudley Sutton.



Georgia on my mind

Silent films from Georgia and some early Michael Curtiz were highlights at Pordenone this year for **Geoff Brown**

As a dedicated cinephile, how would you like to celebrate your 30th birthday? Discovering rare Russian treasures, perhaps? Having Clara Bow, luscious and flirty, leap into your lap? Laughing at Chaplin? Eating *gelato* in the blazing sun? All these options and many more were available in October at the 30th festival of silent cinema heaven, the *Giornate del cinema muto* in Pordenone, Italy.

The week was at its most festive during the packed screening of Chaplin's *The Circus* (1928) – the queue to get in filled the main piazza. And the final night, featuring Victor Sjöström's 1928 *The Wind* (with Carl Davis's magnificent score), left everyone exulted. The party spirit didn't last all week, however. Several items hit us like a concrete block, especially Kenneth Macpherson's 1930 psychoanalytical puzzle *Borderline* (just the kind of film you don't want to see on a Friday night).

The festival's tastiest and most exotic section gathered six specimens of Georgian cinema. Last year's discovery, director Lev Push, was featured again with two films from 1930, *The Doomed* (*Gantsirulni*) and *Mzago and Gela* (*Mzago da Gela*) – further demonstration of his knack



Lavish gesture: 'Red Heels', an early work by Mihály Kertész, aka Michael Curtiz

for creating compelling characters, forceful narratives and singularly striking imagery. And Nikolai Shengelay's *Eliso* (1928) was a revelation: a Chechen tale of religious hatred and ethnic cleansing with a fierce contemporary relevance, which showed the director's mastery of composition and rhythm.

The 1931 film *Khabarda* from Mikheil Chiaureli, who later directed the notorious *The Fall of Berlin*, was also quite an experience. Avant-garde

belligerence meets Stalinist heroics: a combustible mix excitingly matched by a tumultuous piano-and-drum accompaniment provided by Donald Sosin and Frank Bockius.

The other juicy strand was 'Kertész before Curtiz', a six-pack carefully selected from the many Hungarian and Austrian films of Hungarian-born director Mihály Kertész, who went on to direct *Casablanca* as Michael Curtiz. Opinion varied over his 1925 Lily Damita vehicle *Red Heels* (*Das*

Spielzeug von Paris). Twaddle or masterpiece? The former, I'd say, but at least luxuriously appointed. Sounder exhibitions of Curtiz's genius came in the lavish and incisive 1924 Egyptian adventure *The Moon of Israel* (*Die Sklavenkönigin*) and *The Young Medardus* (*Der junge Medardus*) – a 1923 tale of Vienna under Napoleon's rule, masterly in its breadth, depth, mass spectacle and spatial design.

It was harder to sink with pleasure into the films made by Soviet directors Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg. Even with its newly edited Shostakovich score blazing away under the baton of Mark Fitzgerald, *New Babylon* (1929) provided a lowering opening night. Joy came instead from *The Devil's Wheel* (1926), made before their exuberance had hardened into glacial caricature.

Of all the rediscovered rarities, Famous Players-Lasky Corporation's *The Little Minister* from 1921 proved most delightful. Before the festival opened, the prospect of viewing three long-lost reels of Graham Cutts's *The White Shadow* – a ridiculous 1924 tale of twin sisters made with the assistance of the young Alfred Hitchcock – stirred a tornado of publicity. In the end, those seeking the master's visual fingerprints were disappointed. But a fragment of Garbo kissing Lars Hanson in Sjöström's *The Divine Woman* (1928) proved a succulent tease.

THE NUMBERS

Tailor made

The British public has embraced Gary Oldman's comeback, says **Charles Gant**

With hindsight, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*'s dominance of the UK box-office in late September and early October might seem a foregone conclusion. Four straight weeks at £1m-plus, three of them chart-topping, and a cumulative gross after 31 days of £12.34m. That puts it ahead of recent major films including Scorsese's *Shutter Island* (£10.75m) and Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (£10.93m), as well as so-called "blockbusters" from this summer such as *Cowboys & Aliens* (£5.61m) and *Captain America* (£9.47m).

It was not always thus. Universal, which had first refusal thanks to its

relationship with the film's producers Working Title, initially declined to back it, evidently viewing it as too risky. The acclaimed and much-loved 1979 TV miniseries starring Alec Guinness cast a long shadow. And top-lined star Gary Oldman hadn't carried a film in over a decade, preferring to take supporting roles in Batman and Harry Potter movies – would the public line up to see him?

It was StudioCanal that fully financed the film, with encouragement from its UK subsidiary Optimum Releasing. Then, thanks to a combination of luck and judgement, supporting actors such as Colin Firth, Tom Hardy and Benedict Cumberbatch became hot properties between casting and release. Tomas Alfredson, fresh from *Let the Right One In*, proved an astute choice for

director. Also September, falling just after the summer blockbuster season, is traditionally a good time to release a commercially appealing upscale film – it worked for *The Queen*, *Atonement* and *Pride & Prejudice* – and cues up a late January DVD release, perfect if awards nominations accrue.

John Trafford-Owen, distribution boss at StudioCanal UK (as Optimum Releasing has now been renamed), agrees that the planets were well aligned. But he puts special emphasis on the appeal of Oldman. "He was always a huge selling-point for us," he says. "He hadn't had a starring role for a long while, which we hoped would be a big positive. There was this massive untapped love for him. The public had a pent-up desire to see him in a lead role." Key to StudioCanal's strategy was maintaining audience

Gary Oldman at the UK box office, major roles

Film	Year	Gross
Hannibal	2001	£21,578,566
Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*	2011	£12,342,665
Bram Stoker's Dracula	1993	£11,548,429
Lost in Space	1998	£10,664,453
The Fifth Element	1997	£7,089,335
Air Force One	1997	£6,113,308
The Book of Eli	2010	£4,195,596
Leon	1995	£3,684,187

* Gross after 31 days

word of mouth by not mis-selling the title. "We had a slow-paced thriller that built to a crescendo," says Trafford-Owen, "and that's what we presented. If we'd attempted to make it look like *Bourne*, the audience might have felt cheated and walked away unhappy. We sold it as a brainy thriller where you have to engage."

Tomorrow never knows

Less interested in its heist than its characters' psyches, 'Odds Against Tomorrow' was a favourite of Jean-Pierre Melville – and Paul Tickell

Although it gets the occasional screening and is available on DVD, Robert Wise's *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1959) remains a neglected masterpiece. In its treatment of race and with its African-American star Harry Belafonte (who was also the film's executive producer), the film is ahead of its time. It is also a testimony to Wise's versatility – this is the director who gave us everything from *The Curse of the Cat People* (1944) to *The Sound of Music* (1965).

Odds Against Tomorrow is best described as a noir-ish heist movie. The heist movie often concerns itself with process – a minute but exciting examination of some spectacular robbery or kidnap. It also likes to linger over the fallout when the job goes wrong. But *Odds Against Tomorrow* shows little interest in the planning and mechanics of its heist – a bank robbery in a small industrial town outside New York. What really distinguishes the film is its concentration on what goes wrong beforehand – so much so that the robbery only occurs at the very end of the film.

The ending is truly apocalyptic, as the robbery leads to a shootout in a petrochemical plant and then an explosion reminiscent of Raoul Walsh's *White Heat* (1949). But there's no self-combusting Jimmy Cagney yelling, "Made it, Ma. Top of the world!" This is total obliteration – a damnation of biblical proportions without even the saving grace of Cagney's gleeful nihilism.

The infernal flames are of a piece with the film's opening shots, which depict New York as some kind of doomed, windswept city of the plain. The malign wind is more metaphysical than elemental, its force even greater in the first interior shots – of a hotel through whose lift shaft it howls like a banshee.

Things are already looking – and certainly sounding – bad. But Wise's film is no parade of glib pessimism. It earns its despair. For screenwriter Abraham Polonsky (blacklisted as a communist during the McCarthy-era Hollywood witch hunts, and credited here as John O. Killens) tragedy is located in a set of social meanings, not some abstracted 'human condition'. Polonsky's interest in the social as well as the psychological – and ultimately also the political – is



Divided we fall: tensions between Robert Ryan and Harry Belafonte undermine the heist

rooted in story and character. Most of what goes wrong before the heist, which is being organised by ex-cop Dave Burke (Ed Begley), can be attributed to the racism of one of his recruits – ex-con Earl Slater (Robert Ryan). Thus the bank robbery is doomed to failure for 'personal' reasons and not because of some breakdown in the plan or because of some great detective work.

Ryan's racist – an interesting role for an actor so vociferous in real life on behalf of civil rights – is no cardboard cut-out. He doesn't exactly gain our sympathy, but there is an understanding of his desperate circumstances. Stigmatised by his time in prison and out of work, Slater has a steady girlfriend, Lorry (Shelley Winters), but still feels like a loner. Further troubled depths are revealed when we see him first rejecting and then succumbing to the sexual advances of his neighbour Helen (Gloria Grahame).

Just as Earl Slater is no straightforward villain, Burke's other recruit, African-American Johnny Ingram (Harry Belafonte), is no obvious hero. (Slater, of course, hates

What goes wrong can be attributed to the racism of Robert Ryan's ex-con

him on sight.) Johnny is a nightclub singer who is certainly one for the wine, women and song – and the horses. His gambling debts leave him at the mercy of loan-shark gangsters. His womanising and general flakiness have led to a painful separation from his wife and their daughter. However, against the odds, he is trying to make a go of things. And failing.

The extensive location shooting in the film was pioneering, right from the windswept opening; the use of specialist infra-red stock makes the streets look utterly real yet somehow out of kilter, with Slater more like a ghost than a man of flesh and blood. This 'estranged' realism is carried over into scenes set in New York's outlying districts, a phantasmagoria rather than suburbia: industrial wastelands and waterways jammed

with flotsam and jetsam. Killing time before their bank job, the robbers feel equally washed up as they contemplate the floating jumble.

It's in scenes like these that Wise gets behind his characters' social personae and into their psyches. It's all done by suggestion – by mood and image rather than crude psychologising. These are cinematic states of mind that have come to be associated with European auteurs, but here they are in 1950s America. Indeed *Odds Against Tomorrow* was French noir director Jean-Pierre Melville's favourite film.

Wise, a former film editor who cut *Citizen Kane*, is adept at finding the fleeting moment that reveals a character's soul. To describe such moments – for instance, when Johnny sees a discarded doll in the water – is almost to kill them by critique, like breaking down a delicate butterfly into its component parts. But it's the parts coming together that produce these elusive moments. That floating doll conjures up the women in Johnny's life, and that includes his daughter; but it's also Johnny himself – with whom the gods are toying before they discard him. It's all of these things and none of them. After all, Johnny is just looking and the film only suggesting. But that's symbolism for you: the art of suggestion.

The score by John Lewis, pianist of the Modern Jazz Quartet, plays a big part in the making of such moments. It's vibrant and aggressive, following events as they unfold while also at times leading them like some motivational force. But Lewis's bebop hardness and objectivity (before the MJQ, he played with Charlie Parker) can also switch at the drop of a hi-hat into something more subjective and soul-searching.

These swift mood changes don't happen without the light touch of editor Dede Allen, who would go on to work with Arthur Penn on *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *Night Moves* (1975). Gene Hackman's private eye from *Night Moves* wouldn't be out of place in *Odds Against Tomorrow*. Here's a man who bites off more than he can chew, which is as good as asking the Fates to come and get you. And in *Odds Against Tomorrow*, they do. The genius of the film is that its Greek tragedy is rooted in the here and now of a racially divided 1950s America. And there's no need for a chorus: the characters' dry oneliners and gallows humour provide their own running commentary. **Paul Tickell is the director of the features 'Crush Proof' and 'Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry'**

What the papers said

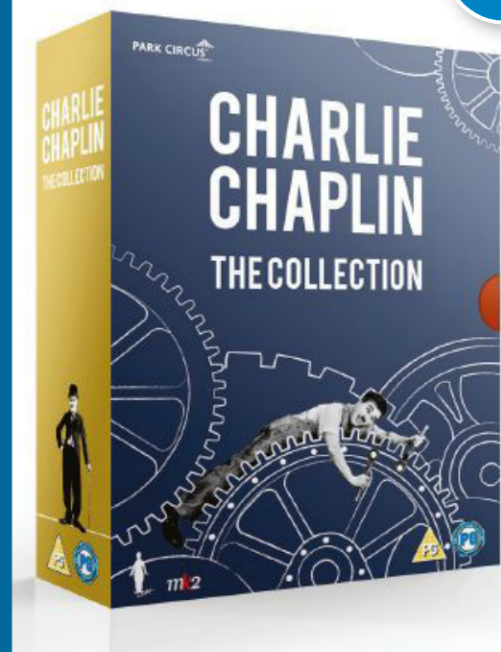


that Hollywood was making ten years ago. The same players are given the same melancholy-tough dialogue... and the message is still the same – a generalised plea for racial tolerance in a context of

seediness and corruption... [it] emerges as an efficient but unnecessarily portentous thriller." **Monthly Film Bulletin, Feb 1960**
 "Robert Wise has drawn fine performances from his players. It is the most sustained acting Belafonte has done. Ryan makes the flesh crawl as the fanatical bigot. Begley turns in a superb study of a foolish, befuddled man." **Variety, 31 December 1958**

12 DISC
BOX SET

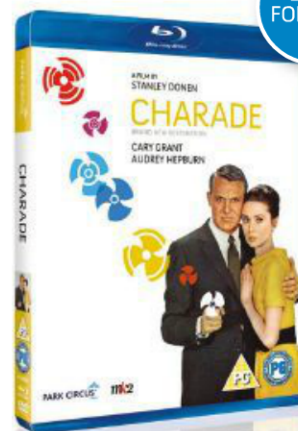
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Empire's twilight

The 'empire' film is an enduring British genre, but in the 1950s it carried an extra charge, says Dylan Cave

What can fiction films tell us about a historical moment? Their flabby story arcs, filled with fabricated action, irrelevant romance and contrived confrontations, provide no basis for evidence, accuracy or fact, especially in comparison to documentary or newsreel. And yet we're in constant thrall to the power of the movies to hold up a 'mirror to society' – to reveal the kernel of emotional truth that, whether intentional or not, defines the essence of what was going on at a particular moment.

Britain's experience of the swift process of decolonisation in the aftermath of World War II may be considered just such a national moment. After 200 years as a world power, Britain's position on the international stage was in decline and so too was its grasp on empire. Over a 20-year period, from 1946 to the mid-1960s, the British Empire evolved into the Commonwealth and the majority of its former colonies gained independence. This heralded a massive change in Great Britain's international profile, leaving a mark on the population's psyche. But how was that mark expressed?

A series of British films set during this period traces the transformation of the empire and the challenges faced by those countries seeking independence. Together they reflect changing social and political attitudes in Britain as the country morphed from stuffy but impoverished imperialist to vanguard of the liberal swinging 60s.

Where No Vultures Fly (1951) typifies the sort of empire film British audiences could expect to see in the early 1950s, an era when the public was still in denial about the changes on the horizon. The tale of a game warden trying to set up a national reserve in Kenya, it's aimed squarely at the family audience and has little interest in altering the status quo. The antagonist is ultimately revealed as an unscrupulous Western hunter, but political or social commentary is largely glossed over in favour of the more anodyne subject of animal welfare. Under the direction of Harry Watt, the film was a significant hit for Ealing, showcasing the British public appetite for empire films. (It was also chosen as the 1951 Royal Film Performance.)

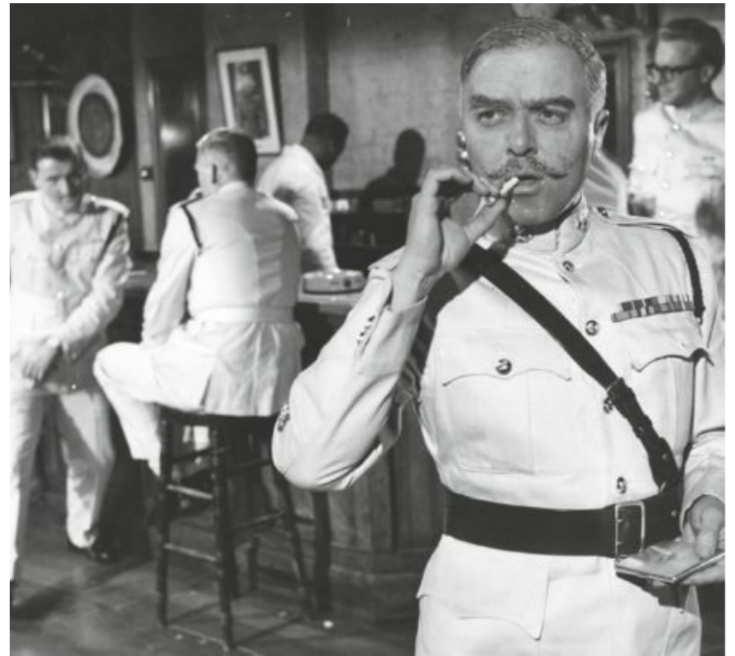
Similarly popular was the Rank Organisation's first venture into

contemporary colonial drama, Ken Annakin's *The Planter's Wife* (1952). Drafting in Claudette Colbert as the eponymous wife caught up in a siege of her husband's rubber plantation, the film was made in part to show American audiences the seriousness of the 'emergency' in British Malaya (now Malaysia). With its lonely plantation surrounded by sandbags, machine guns and barbed wire, the film easily evokes the western, playing like an anglicised version of John Ford's *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939). The lobby poster for the film plays on this association, depicting Jack Hawkins and Colbert accessorised with heavy weaponry – an image that gives a clue as to the degree of political sensitivity shown here for the intricacies of the Malayan situation. (This film has as little interest in the Malay independence movement as John Ford had in the way of life of the Mohawks.)

The success of both these films led to a resurgent interest in filming in Britain's colonies. But if films were to reflect the changes occurring in the empire with any accuracy, the unashamed imperialist stance of *The Planter's Wife* could hardly be sustained. The films that followed subsequently took a more liberal agenda. John Grierson's Group 3 productions embarked on their most ambitious project, Cyril Frankel's *Man of Africa* (1953), a docudrama detailing the plight of a Ugandan tribe forced to move from their home – and one of the first British feature films to star an entirely black cast.

Shot in the striking Ferrinacolor, it's a handsome snapshot of the ambitions of a country preparing for self-government, but even so it cannot avoid the trap of patriarchal representation. This is Africa as filmed by Europeans – though it never pretends to be anything other than that, and doesn't patronise the people it depicts. In fact it gives its characters their unique – and previously unheard – voice, albeit one mediated by the filmmakers. A key piece of dialogue comes when its hero Jonathan is faced by the prejudice of his people against the rival tribe that he has befriended. "Don't worry," he is told. "It takes a long time for old ideas to die."

The death of old ideas is also at the heart of *Simba* (1955), an unflinching look at the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya. What's remarkable about Brian Desmond Hurst's film is the bold way in which it tries to engage with the political situation in Kenya. As Alan Howard, a disinterested Kenyan landowner and – at heart



The swansong of the 'end of empire' cycle, 'Guns at Batasi' gives Richard Attenborough a vivid central role as a sergeant major

– a racist, Dirk Bogarde shows an early interest in the kind of challenging roles for which he was later famed. It's only through his relationship with the Kenyan Dr Karanja that Howard's reactionary impulse is tempered; played with

dignity by the Bermudian actor Earl Cameron, Karanja tries to balance his Kikuyu ancestry with his colonial understanding of 'civilisation'. But though *Simba* addresses the uncomfortable truth about the trauma of a nation during the

Films for the colonies

In October 1939, as the British Empire prepared for war, the Ministry of Information established a new film unit that sought to bring the messages, instructions and ideologies of the British government directly to African audiences. Over the next 15 years, the Colonial Film Unit would produce more than 200 short films. Its influential head, William Sellers, proposed that these films should be constructed specifically for what he referred to as "primitive peoples". In doing this, he developed a 'specialised' technique based on racial and cultural assumptions about the cognitive capabilities of African audiences that precluded the use of close-ups, cross-cutting, short scenes and excessive movement within the frame.

The CFU exhibited these works in its fleet of mobile cinema vans, imagining such film shows as a way of educating and organising colonial citizens. The

films themselves would promote new models of economic development and cooperation as part of a broader effort to sustain an empire and economy that were increasingly under threat.

The 'specialised' model that Sellers



difficult shift from empire territory to free state, it only alludes to the British force that was used in controlling the Mau Mau attacks. The full extent of the brutality wrought on Kikuyu suspects is shamefully ignored.

The film also suffers from an unconvincing and padded romance between Bogarde and Virginia McKenna – a distraction from the more worthy ambitions of the screenplay. More successful in its blend of romantic problems and colonial politics is another Rank production, Ronald Neame's underrated *Windom's Way* (1957). Here Peter Finch plays a doctor working in Malaya who becomes embroiled in the sinister clashes between a ruthless rubber plantation owner (played as a blustering oaf by Michael Hordern), unscrupulous government leaders and fanatical rebels. Jill Craigie, wife of Labour MP Michael Foot, wrote a screenplay that really nails the British dilemma of finding the right way to 'get out' of the Empire, bravely raising uncomfortable questions about legacy and colonial responsibility. In a moment of sublime wit, Finch's Windom is rescued from heavy questioning at the hands of a Malayan commissioner when his faux naive wife (Mary Ure) politely insists that the proceedings be halted for dinner. Windom despises his wife's petty niceties, but in that moment they save him from torture. Neame's film was nominated for four British Film Awards (the precursors to

the Baftas), though in the event it was completely overshadowed by David Lean's *The Bridge on the River Kwai*.

Of course, not all films felt the need to engage with such sticky political issues. For many wanting to film in distant corners of the empire, colourful and sensational adventure provided the only motive. Before buying the Bond franchise, Cubby Broccoli's Warwick Films produced a run of empire potboilers that used familiar stories – Mau Mau in *Safari* (1956), animal welfare in *Odongo* (1956) – but had little time for political or social engagement. Nevertheless, the liberal agenda left a mark. By the early 1960s, African-set British films were united in their assertion of the end of our days as a colonial power. Alexander Mackendrick's *Sammy Going South* (1963), for instance, follows orphan Sammy's journey south from Port Said in Egypt to live with his aunt in Durban, South Africa, linking the hopes of the pre-teen finding independence with those of the emerging continent through which he is travelling.

Zulu (1963) has a more dichotomous relationship with the politics of the day. Producer-star Stanley Baker and director Cy Endfield aimed to recreate the empire movie as a kind of western, eschewing the issues raised in the contemporary empire pictures that had immediately preceded it to focus instead on a tale of colonial history. But although it slips easily into flag-

waving celebration of military grit, the film inherits the anti-colonial rhetoric of the earlier films. Blacklisted American director Endfield uses gallows humour to point out the bleak irony of the Welsh soldiers defending an isolated outpost against 4,000 Zulus. "Why us?" asks the timid Private Cole (Gary Bond). "Because we're here, lad," answers Colour-Sergeant Bourne (Nigel Green). "Nobody else. Just us." It's an exchange that subtly questions the validity of their being there at all.

A more explicit statement of the military role in the former colonies can be found in John Guillermin's *Guns at Batasi* (1964). The swansong



'The Planter's Wife'; left, 'Guns at Batasi'

of the 'end of empire' cycle, the film gives Richard Attenborough a vivid central role as Regimental Sergeant Major Lauderdale, a pompous firebrand overseeing an unnamed African state's passing of power from British rule to independence. Lauderdale is initially mocked as an outdated emblem of the old empire, but the film gives him his head when the peaceful transition from British rule to colonial independence is interrupted by a military coup. It's only towards the end that the film reconfirms its progressive message and betrays Lauderdale's military response as, almost, illegal. His response to events – by smashing a cherished emblem of empire – is dignified but defiant.

The end of *Guns at Batasi* also marked the closing down of the debate about contemporary British intervention; by 1964 many former colonies had achieved independence. But this group of films left an impact on the shape of empire films to come. From Attenborough's *Gandhi* (1982) and Lean's *A Passage to India* (1984) to *The Constant Gardener* (2005) and *The Last King of Scotland* (2007), British films have regularly revisited the empire and the issue of colonial responsibility. The questions that these films continue to pose can be traced back to the liberal impulse of a handful of 1950s fiction filmmakers.

■ The season 'End of Empire' plays throughout November at BFI Southbank, London

proposed was evident in the CFU's first production, 'Mr English at Home' (1940), which represented British life to African audiences – a common theme within wartime CFU productions. 'Springtime in an English Village' (1944) showed two African schoolgirls embraced within this British idyll, while later productions showed African troops ('Victory Parade', 1946), sportsmen ('Nigerian Footballers in England', 1949), musicians ('Colonial Cinemagazine no. 9', 1947) and leaders ('African Conference in London', 1948) working with – and learning from – their British counterparts. These later films sought to highlight to African audiences the British public's support for and interest in its colonies and, in particular, the prominent position now afforded to Africa following Indian independence, within a supposedly modern post-war empire.

After the war, the role of the CFU

changed in ways that often mirrored the broader political processes of decolonisation. At the start of 1946 the CFU sent units to East and West Africa. Now funded under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, the CFU made films for African audiences with titles like 'Weaving in Togoland' (1948), 'Nigerian Cocoa Farmer' (1948) and 'Better Homes' (1948), as practical instruction replaced more general imperial propaganda.

By the end of decade, the CFU had sent 12 production units to work in eight territories. It had also now shut down its home unit, moving production away from London and into the colonies. The CFU set up training schools in Accra (1948), Jamaica (1950) and Cyprus (1951), and employed many of these local trainees in newly formed local units, set up in the Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria and Jamaica. For the most part, local

workers assumed junior positions within these units, as the CFU only reluctantly ceded authority.

However, within the film shows themselves an increasing African presence was evident. The local commentator – a showman responsible for organising, introducing and translating the films – could transform them and, operating largely free of European supervision, provide a local voice within this early African cinema.

By the time of the Colonial Film Unit's closure in 1955, the British Empire had changed beyond all recognition. The unit's role had shifted accordingly, from generating support for the imperial war effort to promoting development within the colonies – and ultimately to paving the way for self-government. The films of the nascent local units, produced against the well-concealed backdrop of a fading empire, include fictional films ('The Boy

Kumasenu', 1952), instructional shorts ('I Will Speak English', 1954) and comedies promoting government schemes ('Progress in Kojokrom', 1953).

Viewed today, these films allow us to understand better the ways in which the British state sought to manage, contain and finally prepare for the end of empire. Whether that project succeeded, however, is another matter, as audiences gathering for the film shows – usually without European supervision – may well have proceeded to ignore, resist or obstruct the presentation of these government messages. ♦ Tom Rice

■ All of the films mentioned are now available to view online through a major new website, Colonial Film: Moving Images of the British Empire (www.colonialfilm.org.uk). The site contains detailed historical essays and more than 150 films online



Krzysztof Kieslowski The Three Colours Trilogy

Available for the very first time on Blu-ray, Krzysztof Kieslowski's multi award-winning masterpieces, Three Colours Blue, White and Red, are landmarks of world cinema. Featuring immaculate performances from Juliette Binoche, Irene Jacob and Julie Delphy among others, the trilogy is arguably the foremost achievement by one of the world's greatest directors.

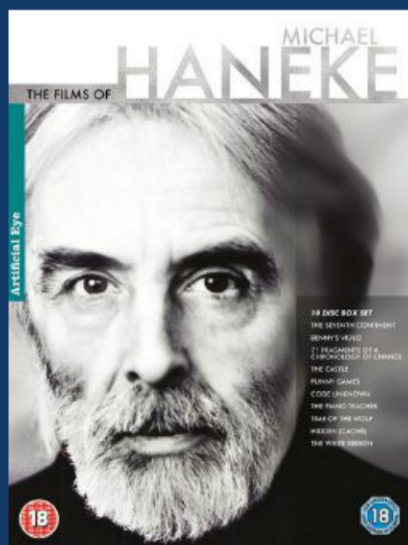
RELEASED ON BLU-RAY 21ST NOVEMBER



Asghar Farhadi A Separation

A suspenseful and intelligent drama detailing the fractures and tensions at the heart of Iranian society. Winner of the Golden Bear at the 2011 Berlin Film Festival.

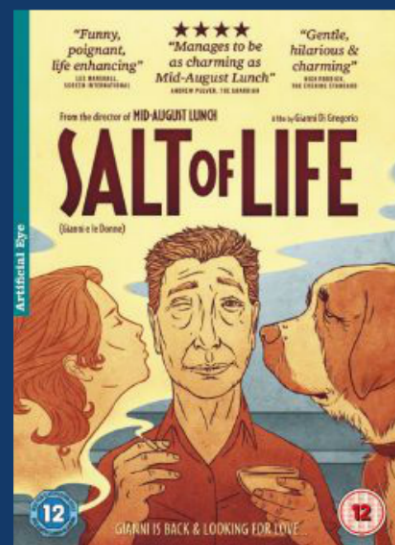
RELEASED ON DVD & BLU-RAY 21ST NOVEMBER



Michael Haneke The Film of Michael Haneke (10 disc Set)

This deluxe set features ten of Haneke's masterpieces including the Palme d'Or-winning The White Ribbon, 71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance, Benny's Video, The Castle, Code Unknown, Funny Games, Hidden, The Piano Teacher, The Seventh Continent and Time of the Wolf.

RELEASED ON DVD 7TH NOVEMBER



Gianni Di Gregorio Salt of Life

Inspired by his friends sexual escapades, Gianni decides to get a girlfriend and reacquaint himself with some of life's little pleasures. Directed by and starring Gianni Di Gregorio, this is a delightful comedy featuring characters from the indie hit Mid-August Lunch.

RELEASED ON DVD 5TH DECEMBER

Friday night & Saturday morning

A brief encounter between two gay men in Nottingham, 'Weekend' earned US raves for director Andrew Haigh. He talks to **Thomas Dawson**

On the day we met in late September, British filmmaker Andrew Haigh had just returned from New York, where he had been promoting the release of his low-budget drama *Weekend*. He was clearly still reeling in disbelief at just how praising the American reviews have been. A.O. Scott of *The New York Times* wrote of "an astonishingly self-assured, unassumingly profound second feature... it is one of the most satisfying love stories you are likely to see on screen this year." Novelist Bret Easton Ellis, meanwhile, tweeted: "It might be the greatest film about gay men ever made."

"When I was writing the script," reveals Haigh, "I didn't know that anybody was going to see it. I thought it might find a small niche audience on DVD. We tried getting money from Film4 and the Film Council, but we got turned down even for completion funding. So it's weird finding out that it's going to be playing in 35 cities across America, in highly unlikely places like Denver and Idaho."

There's a deceptive simplicity to the digitally photographed *Weekend*, which observes two twentysomething gay men – sweet-natured lifeguard Russell (Tom Cullen) and acerbic, aspiring artist Glen (Chris New) – who hook up at a Nottingham bar on a Friday night. They wake the next morning both probably expecting to part. But to the surprise of both men, they wind up spending an intimate weekend together, establishing a real emotional connection, despite knowing that it must end, for Glen is scheduled to fly off to study in America that very Sunday afternoon.

"I wanted to do something honest about gay relationships," explains Haigh, "because I just don't see that in films. People talk about the romantic element in *Weekend*, but to me it's a character study about two complex, well-rounded characters. I don't want to watch a film unless the characters feel real and I care about them."

Russell and Glen embody opposing perspectives within the broader terrain of contemporary gay life. Whereas Russell downplays his sexuality, having come out only to close friends and not to workmates, Glen vocally challenges what he calls the "boy meets girl hegemony"



Sleeper: Tom Cullen and Chris New in 'Weekend', directed by Andrew Haigh, below

of the dominant heterosexual culture. However, Haigh stresses that he "didn't want Russell and Glen to become mouthpieces. I gave them detailed backstories, because politics doesn't exist in a void – it's shaped by everything that's happened to you. Too often in films I find that characters come out with arguments and you don't understand why they have these beliefs. I wanted to show, for example, why the adopted Russell would love to get married to another man and have a family together, and why Glen wouldn't want to do that."

Those who have pigeonholed *Weekend* as a 'gay *Before Sunrise*' are overlooking the fact that the film explores the mysterious nature of all our identities, regardless of the sexual preferences of the spectator. In our everyday lives, each of us is constantly constructing stories and versions of who we are, a process heightened amidst the excitement and fear of meeting a new partner. Haigh himself says he has always been fascinated by people struggling for authenticity in who they want to be, and the gap between who they are in private and who they are in public.

"Obviously setting it in a gay context is somewhere where these

'I don't want to watch a film unless the characters feel real and I care about them'

questions are really important," he continues, "but I've been really struck by the ways straight male viewers have responded to the film. They seem to respond to the ways the characters are trying to make sense of who they are and what they are doing with their lives."

Meaning in *Weekend* is derived more from *mise en scène* than montage, with Haigh favouring a mixture of long, fluent takes and static exterior compositions. From the outset, however, the director realised it was the chemistry between his two lead actors that would determine the success of the film. "I got people to improvise in pairs at rehearsals, because the key was finding the spark between a couple. Chris and Tom really worked well together – they were excited by each

other's performances – and I wanted to capture that on screen. The mechanics of making a film often strip away the intimacy and the chemistry between the actors. That's why I'd make a point of sitting down and having a chat with them between takes, and I got them to live in an apartment together during the shoot. We shot *Weekend* chronologically, because it was important for the actors to get to know each other in real life like they do in the film."

Haigh cites American independent directors Kelly Reichardt and Ramin Bahrani as important influences, both formally and thematically. "They shoot things simply and you know they have thought exactly where they put the camera, and it feels like real life. What I like about [Reichardt's] *Old Joy* and [Bahrani's] *Goodbye Solo* is that they are subtle and they let you gradually get to know the people in them. If you make an audience work a little bit harder in what they are looking at, the film will resonate more deeply."

Weekend also revisits key locations from an earlier Nottingham film, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), a personal favourite of Haigh's. "I see parallels between Arthur Seaton [played by Albert Finney] and Glen, who is so angry with the world and wants to cause offence. He's so determined to be an individual that he doesn't allow himself to be happy most of the time."

Given that Haigh served his filmmaking apprenticeship working as an editor with Ridley Scott on the likes of *Black Hawk Down* and *Kingdom of Heaven*, I wonder whether he secretly nurtures ambitions to direct blockbusters. "No," he smiles. "Editing those films taught me what I didn't want to do. I'm interested in intimate stories, not massive dramas. I've got an agent in the States now and they're sending me all sorts of scripts, most of which are unsuitable." There have been reports in the trade press that Haigh is developing a film called *Simon Is Waiting*, about a British actor starring in a US TV show and awaiting the crucial results of a medical test. Haigh, though, is circumspect about revealing details, admitting, "I talked about one project before in *The New York Times*, which was a planned remake of Agnès Varda's film *Cleo from 5 to 7*, which probably isn't going to be my next project now. All I'll say is I will definitely do something about old age."

■ 'Weekend' is released on 4 November, and is reviewed on page 80



Barbican, the home of silent cinema in London



Sun 6 Nov 7.30pm, Barbican Hall

The Passion of Joan of Arc

With the **London Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by **Marin Alsop**.

Carl Dreyer's iconic film is brought to life with Richard Einhorn's beautifully haunting minimalistic score, *Voices of Light*. Einhorn's oratorio melds itself into Dreyer's images to create an increasingly tense atmosphere of ethereal horror.



Sun 13 Nov 4pm, Cinema 1

The Wolves PG* UK Premiere

With live musical accompaniment by **Grupo de Música Contemporânea de Lisboa**.

Rino Lupo makes one of the most captivating films of the Portuguese silent era. Shot entirely on location, the sea and the mountains emphasise the wildly violent desires and impulses of the film's protagonists.

Part of the 2nd UK Portuguese Film Festival, curated by Filmville.



Sun 13 Nov 3pm & 8pm, Barbican Hall

Louis 15* European Premiere

With live music written by Wynton Marsalis and performed by a hand-picked ensemble.

A brand new Chaplin-inspired silent film, with the streets of New Orleans providing an evocative backdrop as a young Louis Armstrong navigates the colourful intricacies of life in the quintessential jazz city.



Sun 20 Nov 4pm, Cinema 1

Battalion PG*

With live piano accompaniment by **Jiri Hradil**.

Popular Czech singer Karel Hasler stars as the disillusioned lawyer who hits skid row after he finds his wife with a lover. Raw and effective, director Premysl Prazsky imbues his 14th film with an intellectual and emotional depth exceptional for its time.



Sun 4 Dec 4pm, Cinema 1

The Scarecrow + Buster Keaton Shorts U*

With live accompaniment by the **Guildhall School's Jazz Department**.

Buster Keaton stars in the hilarious, *The Scarecrow*, as a farmhand whose affections for the farmer's daughter are rivalled. In his cottage of mechanical devices, can he win over the girl of his dreams? Plus a selection of classic Keaton short films.

Tickets from £9.50
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The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre

Piece of the action

How to find out which way the wind blows in the entertainment industry? Heading down the pub in Portsmouth helps. As does lunching in Lyon. In the past month, both these places have witnessed events with wide-reaching implications.

On 4 October Karen Murphy, landlady of the Red, White & Blue in Southsea (just down the road from the Pompey ground at Fratton Park, Portsmouth) lifted a celebratory pint to the watching media. Up in London, meanwhile, FA Premier League bosses were grinding their teeth. The European Court of Justice had just found in Karen Murphy's favour, after she had paid nearly £8,000 in fines for using a Greek decoder card to access satellite broadcasts of Premier League games. The FA Premier League had alleged that she had breached its UK monopoly, which earns it a great deal of money from TV broadcasters, currently Sky Sports.

But the ECJ ruled that: "The FAPL cannot claim copyright in the Premier League matches themselves, as those sporting events cannot be considered to be an author's own intellectual creation and, therefore, to be 'works' for the purposes of copyright in the European Union."

Fair enough. I don't think the FAPL was trying to copyright the beautiful game so much as to maintain the high digital wall it had erected around it to prevent others peeping in – just as the major studios deploy every possible means to control their films' various release windows, from theatrical via home entertainment down to broadcast television and beyond. (And, as a quick flick of your remote will confirm, there's a lot of beyond these days.)

What the ECJ said next, however, is where it gets interesting: "Even if national law were to confer comparable protection upon sporting events which would, in principle, be compatible with EU law, a prohibition on using foreign decoder cards would go beyond what is necessary to ensure appropriate remuneration for the holders of the rights concerned."

So the box itself (supplied by QC Leisure) doesn't seem to have been a problem. And it's not illegal to buy a card. All this seemed to open a door to a lot more than just football. But I still thought I might be getting a little carried away until, ten days later, up popped a report from the annual Europa Distribution conference in Lyon.

Here the spectre at the feast was not an enterprising pub landlady



The European Court of Justice found in her favour, after she had paid £8,000 in fines for using a Greek decoder card to access satellite broadcasts of football

but the prospect of individual territory rights no longer being available for films released on a video-on-demand (VOD) platform.

Now, territory rights are a mainstay of the independent film business. A producer uses a sales agent to sell a film's theatrical and ancillary rights to a distributor. Often this is done before a film is actually made, in which case the payment is in the form of a minimum guarantee and is used as collateral for a bank loan to help finance production.

It's a complex and time-honoured procedure, and it is increasingly under threat in the digital universe. Long before VOD came along, there were flaws in the rights system for smaller territories. If you live in Belgium, where 94 per cent of homes are cable-connected, your cable gives you access to channels from France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. Any of these may broadcast films long before Belgian TV can. And don't even ask about Luxembourg, where they gave up trying to combat this sort of thing ages ago.

But sales agents, like everyone else in the movie business, follow the money. They are beginning to gravitate towards major VOD platforms such as Lovefilm, Netflix and the Scandinavian Voddler. These platforms work in terms of regions, or even continents, rather than territories. And they are unwilling to put up money just to be able to beam their titles into plucky little Belgium.

So sales agents are now seriously

considering selling certain films to multi-territory VOD platforms rather than on a territory-by-territory basis. If, that is, the price is right. And increasingly it is. The ECJ ruling seems to further blur the distinction in a way that makes the old system of minimum guarantees and theatrical deals even more difficult to sustain.

This doesn't just concern independent movies. Last month, Universal planned to make autumn blockbuster *Tower Heist* available to subscribers to the cable network owned by its parent company, Comcast, for a premium rate of \$59.99 just three weeks after the film's planned theatrical release. (The current average theatrical window is 17 weeks and shrinking.) Universal only backed down when NATO, the American theatre owners' association, threatened to yank the film from its cinemas if the cable deal went ahead. But there are only a limited number of times NATO can do this kind of thing without either depriving itself of revenue or signing its own death warrant.

I don't often get the chance to quote Yeats in this column, but we do seem to be moving into a period in which "the centre cannot hold". Business practices established and adapted over a period of 30 years (50 in the case of the studios) no longer fit technological realities. Rearguard actions will doubtless continue, as they did against sound, widescreen, selling movies to TV, VHS... But in the end, money talks. ♦♦ Nick Roddick

● **Encounters Film Festival** screens a range of shorts and animation from around the world. Highlights include 'A Gun for George' by Matthew Holness, star of TV series 'Garth Marenghi's Darkplace'; Andrew Kötting's 'An History of Civilisation'; 'Luminaris' by Argentinian Juan Pablo Zaramella, and Tony Grisoni's new short 'The Pizza Miracle'. Watershed, Arncliffe, Bristol, 16-20 November.

● **The London Korean Film Festival** opens with Kim Han-min's 'War of the Arrow', and screens a range of Korean cinema, both old and new, alongside a selection of films about North Korea. Various UK venues, 3-24 November.

● **Leeds International Film Festival** opens with Andrea Arnold's 'Wuthering Heights' and screens a selection of the most interesting new films. Some, such as 'Take Shelter', screened at the recent London Film Festival, others as-yet unreleased include Béla Tarr's 'The Turin Horse' and the Locarno prizewinners 'Nana' and the Romanian 'Best Intentions'. The festival closes with a gala screening of Steve McQueen's 'Shame'. Various venues, Leeds, 3-20 November.

● **Aesthetica Short Film Festival** is an intriguing new event that aims to screen a range of short films in unusual locations across the city of York, making use of its historic buildings and public spaces. York, 3-6 November. www.asff.co.uk

● **Made in Prague** hosts the UK premiere of Václav Havel's film 'Leaving', and a special screening of the 1927 Czech silent film 'Battalion', with live musical accompaniment. There is also a special tribute to veteran director Juraj Herz, who will attend the festival to present his 2010 film 'Habermann', as well as his film 'The Cremator' from 1968. Various venues, London, 10-27 November.



● **The Russian Film Festival** screens a range of recent Russian cinema, including Aleksandr Mindadze's 'Innocent Saturday', Angelina Nikonova's 'Twilight Portrait' and Andrei Zvyagintsev's 'Elena'. Apollo West End, London, 4-13 November.



HOME TERRITORY
'The Deep Blue Sea', right, returns Terence Davies, above, to the early 1950s, the period of his best-known films *'Distant Voices, Still Lives'* and *'The Long Day Closes'*

RECKLESS MOMENT

'The Deep Blue Sea' represents a triumphant return to filmmaking for Terence Davies. He talks to **Geoff Andrew**, while overleaf **Nick James** reports from the set, and talks to rising star Tom Hiddleston

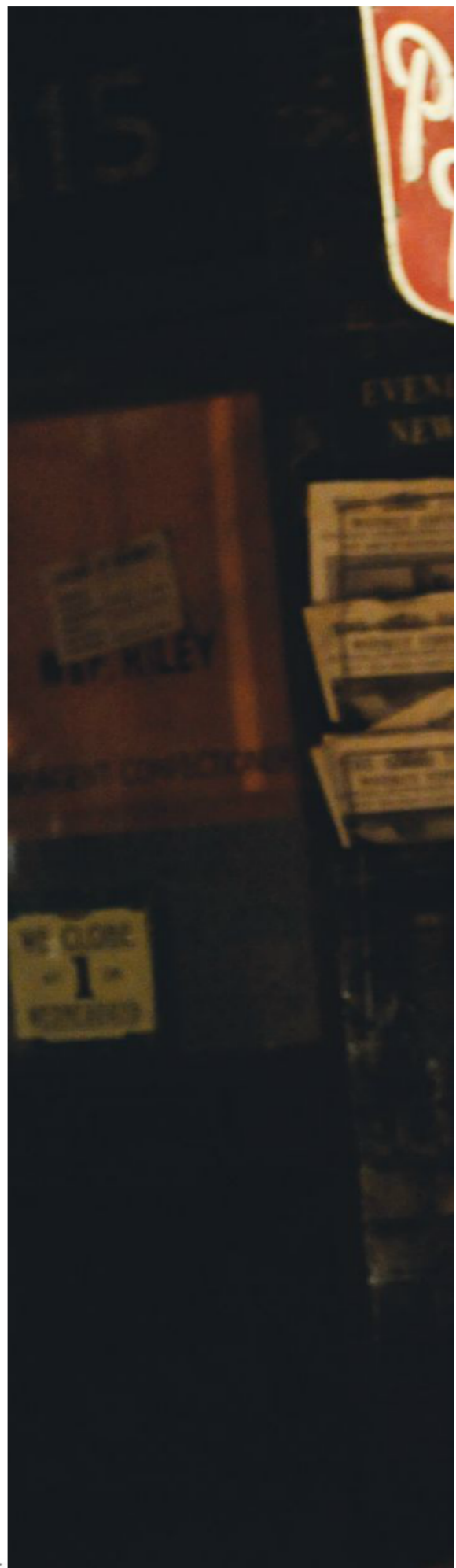
Monday morning in a drab bedsit in the early 1950s. A woman who tried to gas herself the night before is revived by her landlady Mrs Elton and another tenant, Mr Miller, who has some sort of medical experience. While unconscious, Hester dreamed both of her former life with her husband, prominent lawyer Sir William Collyer, and of the start of her passionate but – as it transpired – increasingly unhappy affair with handsome young Freddie Page, an ex-RAF pilot with whom she now shares these lowly London lodgings.

Thus begins – boldly accompanied by a full nine minutes of Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto – Terence Davies's adaptation of Terence Rattigan's 1952 play *The Deep Blue Sea*. This typically, thrillingly cinematic prologue deftly introduces the three main characters: Hester (Rachel Weisz), deeply fond of but understandably unexcited by her solid, adoring husband (Simon Russell Beale), and greedily, almost fatally addicted to the physical pleasures afforded by her relationship with her emotionally immature lover (Tom Hiddleston). Thereafter the film charts Hester's actions over the next 24 hours, various flashbacks shedding light not only on how she arrived at her current predicament, but also on whether she's likely – as Miller has predicted – to make another desperate attempt on her own life.

Anyone well acquainted with Davies's work will hardly be surprised by the film's post-war setting, its concern with frustrated desires, dashed hopes, loneliness and oppressive social constraints, and its formal audacity, invention and elegance. Again we have the fascination with how the past relates to the present; the imaginative use of music to enhance dramatic nuance; the meticulous approach to composition, colour, camera movement and montage; a readiness to confront the painful, even cruel realities of human interaction, often through still, unflinching shots reminiscent of *The House of Mirth* (2000). Indeed, the man who gave us *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988) and *The Long Day Closes* (1992) has even managed to include a few communal singalongs.

And those were not in the play, of course. The project originated when Davies was approached, on behalf of the Sir Terence Rattigan Charitable Trust, by producer Sean O'Connor, who suggested the director consider making something as part of the celebrations for the writer's centenary, but the finished film is undoubtedly more faithful to the spirit of Rattigan's play than to its letter. Davies has jettisoned characters and massive chunks of dialogue, worked in characters and lines of his own, and torn up Rattigan's linear narrative – while remaining true throughout to a protagonist determined, whatever the cost, to remain true to her own passions.

The following interview took place in London shortly after *The Deep Blue Sea* had been announced as the closing night for this year's BFI London Film Festival, and just after it had screened at the Toronto and San Sebastian film festivals. As we started, Davies professed himself tired after these trips, but he proved typically talkative, his deeply felt comments larded with a trademark stream of personal anecdotes and jokes – the majority of which I've sadly had to cut, simply for lack of space.





Terence Davies *The Deep Blue Sea*

◀ **Geoff Andrew:** When Sean O'Connor approached you about doing a Rattigan film, did you already know 'The Deep Blue Sea'?

Terence Davies: No. I couldn't do *The Browning Version* because I love [Anthony] Asquith's [1951] film, or *Separate Tables*, because I think Burt Lancaster's really good [in the 1958 film]. So I read the entire canon, and *The Deep Blue Sea* was the one I felt I could do something with – though initially I had mixed feelings because I didn't know what the play was about. Only when I realised it was about different kinds of love did I feel I could do it.

GA: Had you seen the 1955 version Anatole Litvak directed for Alexander Korda?

TD: My mother took me to the Hippodrome to see it, but I only remembered one shot – of Kenneth More coming down a big staircase. These days you can't really see it, though I did watch about ten minutes on... is it called YouTube? Frankly, it was awful – just the play photographed. And the Ladbroke Grove bedsit is palatial... just after the war? Embarrassing!

GA: So what was the appeal of 'The Deep Blue Sea'?

TD: Partly that I'd never done a play before, though I was concerned I might not be able to pull it off. Rattigan's first acts are always about exposition – I don't like that. If we were to play it from Hester's point of view, all that had to go – it's boring. And because he never lived in a Ladbroke Grove bedsit, much of it doesn't ring true. One example: Mrs Elton says something like, "Hester, you've missed your rent for two months, but you're my favourite tenant so I'll let you stay." No landlady after the war would do that when it was her only source of income! When my sisters got married, women who owned houses would split them up: you'd have one room, no bathroom, and the middle landing was an open stove. No tenants' rights. Miss

your rent and you were out!

Since Hester's off stage for most of the first act [of the play], you just use bits of it. Then it becomes interesting: she's in that state of semi-consciousness and doesn't know where she is because there wasn't enough gas to kill her, so we can move in and out of time. I wanted the play's linear story to move in and out of the cyclical time that is memory. That's what really drew me. But there were other things I needed to do to open it out. A lot of the film is not in Rattigan: William's mother, for instance.

GA: The play has been described as an assault on British middle-class values and fear of emotional commitment. It's certainly partly about post-war Britain's changing values and sexual politics. Did that appeal as well?

TD: I kept telling everyone I don't just know what the 50s looked like but what they felt like. That was crucial. Women did not leave their husbands then, there was nowhere for them to go – if you were in a bad marriage, you just got on with it. But Hester, who's deeply conventional, does a completely unconventional thing: she discovers sexual love, it overwhelms her, and she actually doesn't care! She knows the risk, and takes it.

GA: Besides your memories of the era, were there other personal things you brought to the film?

TD: I grew up with the 'women's pictures'. My sisters would take me to see them – *All That Heaven Allows*, *Magnificent Obsession*, *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing*. Then there were others I saw later on television, like *Letter from an Unknown Woman* and *The Heiress*. I loved those films. It was an era when women were at the centre of the drama.

GA: Was 'All That Heaven Allows' the inspiration for your symmetrical – or, rather, palindromic – opening and closing shots?

TD: Not really, but I was hugely influenced by the

film. I was ten when I first saw it. For me [Douglas] Sirk isn't that great a director, but that film is exquisitely crafted. You know in the first two minutes who the drama's about. That succinctness, the use of Liszt... you imbibe those things when you're young, like children imbibing a language. As I got older I could remember great streams of dialogue and whole shots – I thought everyone was like that!

In the 50s everything was shabby. The only primary colours we saw were the red, yellow and blue gummed labels we used to cut out and make figures from in school! So when we went to a Technicolor film, it was overwhelming because everything else felt black and white, even if it wasn't. The films from around 1940 to 1958 have a wonderful glow we'll never recapture.

GA: Why is the closing shot a reversal of the opening shot? It ends on a bomb site. Are you likening that to Hester's life?

TD: Well, besides wanting to move from night to day, I wanted to show that here in the middle of all this is a house. It's her story, but other lives go on. And at the end, without making it sound unbearably pretentious, Hester's life has been broken, but she'll carry on, as the country did. It's a small implication, because I hate that sort of portentousness, but it's just saying that we've looked at one life over one day, and look how rich it was! And all these people have lives and stories.

GA: You could as easily have looked at Miller's life or the Eltons'. Miller, especially, is more important in the play. You focus instead on Hester and her relationship with the two men. Did you regret cutting Miller's role so much?

TD: Not at all! All that stuff about him being struck off but helping out at night at a children's hospital while being a bookie's runner by day... Sorry, I don't believe a word of that! What I found interesting –

TWO WEEKS IN ANOTHER WORLD

Regular access to a film set is not usually available to film critics, but the new film by Terence Davies found some employment for Nick James. This is his set diary

When a cut in a film changes the angle so radically that it breaks the illusion, making a character suddenly seem to be facing in the wrong direction, it's called 'crossing the line'. But there's a much more firmly policed line in film, the one between critics and filmmakers. The rare leap from one side to the other is only usually achieved when a critic makes a film (à la Truffaut, Godard et al). But what I describe in this set diary was a much more modest visit to the other side.

As some readers may remember, I'm married to the film producer Kate Ogborn ('Under the Skin', 'The Unloved'). Our respective careers don't usually overlap, but when it transpired in July 2010 that Kate was to produce, alongside Sean O'Connor, a film by Terence Davies, one of Britain's all-time great filmmakers, I couldn't gulp back my keenness to get involved. Terence Davies had written a compelling screenplay of Terence Rattigan's play 'The Deep Blue Sea', and the UKFC Production Fund – having been told by the government it was going to be disbanded – was all the keener to back the film, and now

needed it to happen very quickly. Terence wanted to cast Rachel Weisz in the crucial role of Hester, a love-struck adulteress, and she was available only in November and December. Sean O'Connor had developed and nurtured the project with development funding from the Sir Terence Rattigan Charitable Trust. Kate raised the rest of the film's modest budget in a couple of frantic months. By September, pre-production was in full swing.

I asked to be an extra in a communal singing pub scene, and Terence agreed. (In the past, I was a professional singer.) In return I would be given the responsibility of rehearsing the extras.

Thursday 11 November 2010 – British Film Institute

My first contact with the film's talent came when I helped arrange a screening of Max Ophüls's 'Letter from an Unknown Woman' (1948, pictured right) at the BFI for Terence's birthday. Terence gave one of his delightful intros to the film, and it was clear that a certain Ophüls-like elegance was going to be required of his new film. At post-screening drinks, I met several

of the character cast, including Karl Johnson – who was Derek Jarman's Ariel and Wittgenstein, and who here plays Miller, the unlicensed medic living in the boarding house – and Ann Mitchell – best known as Dolly Rawlins, the lead in the Lynda La Plante TV bank-robbery series 'Widows', 'Widows 2' and 'She's Out' – who plays the landlady Mrs Elton.

Lead actor Tom Hiddleston was also present and very friendly. In 'The Deep Blue Sea' he plays Freddie, the former RAF pilot who's never recovered from the heightened existence of the Battle of Britain, with whom Hester falls completely in love. Tom's favourite movie happens to be Michael Mann's 'Heat'. I wrote the BFI Modern Classic book on that film, so we had a common





again this is about my memories – was that he helps when asked and clearly has a relationship with the Eltons, so every now and then you see his kindness, but he's also steely. That's enough! People like that did exist. On our street, if someone died two women always came and laid the body out to wash it. They'd just appear! To a certain extent, that lingers on in Liverpool. If my sister's washing machine plays up, it's, "Oh, there's a lad around the corner..."

GA: It's a dark film about unrequited love, but it seems there's a glimmer of hope, which is quite different from 'The House of Mirth', for example.

TD: Yes, though it's not so much hope as an acceptance of one's situation – not in the sense of being stoic but of, "This is what I've done. I'm prepared to take the consequences, I'll carry on." That seems to me enormously courageous. The play ends weakly, with her deciding to do her paintings. Come on! No one's convinced by that! Even Frith Banbury, who directed the first performances in 1952, found that weak. So we had to have people feel she's gone through her suffering and realises she really loves Freddie, where she can say, "If you're better off without me, I won't keep you." That's real love, and very hard to do. But it gives her the courage to carry on, knowing things will be pretty bleak.

GA: Hester stands firm even when her husband William says she can come back.

TD: Yes. When he asks, "Do you realise what I'm offering?" she says, "Have you any idea how difficult it is to refuse?" It is seductive: if Freddie leaves, what will she do? She's not qualified for anything. In those days even if you got benefit, it

WOMAN IN A DRESSING GOWN
In 'The Deep Blue Sea', Hester (Rachel Weisz) turns her back on a well-to-do marriage for amour fou in a London boarding house

cause – albeit one not too apt for a Terence Davies project. I had also suggested he watch for research one of my favourite Battle of Britain films, 'Angels One Five' (directed in 1952 by the little-known George More O'Ferrall) and he'd done so.

Ruth Myers, the doyenne of period costume designers, was also introduced to me (of whom more later). Cinematographer Florian Hoffmeister, a charming Berliner, asked me if I worked for Screen International, and when I told him it was Sight & Sound, he asked me if I'd been here since the beginning. I told him S&S was founded in 1932 – but that I looked very young for my age.

Sunday 21 November 2010 – Granville Square

I knew I would be trusted to visit the set because, as everyone seemed to understand, if I were to break any confidences, my life at home would not be worth living! And so, on a bitterly cold November evening, I went to Granville Square, King's Cross to witness the film's first night shoot. The interior and exterior of the chosen



terrace house would represent the boarding house to which Hester has fled from her husband Sir William Collyer (Simon Russell Beale) to live with Freddie.

The house had been stripped of all post-war innovations. The house next door had been fenced in with corrugated iron. (More signs of bomb damage would be added digitally later.) At one semi-comic moment, a hidden door in the fence opened and two young residents crept out, looking guilty, as if they were trespassing.

At first we were waiting for darkness, so an overhead shot could be taken, from an upstairs window, of Hester's husband's car – a Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow – pulling away from the house. I watched as autumn leaves

were scattered around a home-made children's cart and the owner of the Rolls fussed around his gleaming prize possession. When darkness fell, there was a 'wet down' and then two or three takes of the drive away.

There was one person for whom my presence on set was a problem: Emma Davie, the unit publicist, whose job it is to police the aforementioned line. On this first occasion, while they were setting up a scene in which Hester encounters her husband outside the house, she found me a useful role: blocking the sightline of the lone paparazzo who had found a vantage point from which to shoot Rachel Weisz – looking gorgeous in her vintage red coat. (Despite my efforts, the pap got his shot. It was in the



Evening Standard the very next day.)

Terence was bubbling with bonhomie and obviously excited to be directing drama again (his first since 2000's 'The House of Mirth'). Later I was to see the house interior – restored to its post-Victorian, dado-rail, objet trouvé glory – as revealed with tremendous pride by James Merifield, the production designer.

Sunday 28 November 2010 – Aldwych Tube Station

Roused at some unmentionable hour, Kate and I headed to the unit base in Lincoln's Inn Fields for breakfast. We found Terence still looking eager, but complaining that he finds it hard to sleep whenever he's shooting. Aldwych is the one disused tube station that Transport for London allows to be used for films. We arrived outside, after sunrise, as people were being fitted into 1940s costume or – in the case of the many period re-enactors – wearing their own carefully maintained gear as policemen, spivs, factory girls, air-raid wardens and so on.

Before the first group of us could go down, we were given a health-and-

lasted 26 weeks, then you had to get a job or, as my sisters and brothers did, sell their clothes. Maybe William would help somehow, find her a job as a secretary or something in a law firm. But for her it would be filling in time. She wouldn't go back to William, and wouldn't fall for anyone else, because Freddie's the love of her life. I like that quiet courage that says, "OK, now I need to get on with it." It was common in the 50s, throughout society. If you made a decision, you stood by it.

GA: It's interesting that, as Hester's approaching this decision while considering another suicide attempt, you insert one scene set during the Blitz and another in which Mrs Elton speaks of her relationship with her ailing husband. Neither scene is in the play, but they seem pivotal in the film.

TD: Absolutely. Hester hits a nadir, then remembers what it was like in the war – all of them down in the tube to survive. It's as if she thinks, "We did that then, so I can't just throw my life away now, no matter how awful the future seems."

Sometimes when you're at your very lowest, some small thing happens. When I was living in a Peabody Trust flat in the Barbican, a neighbour ruined my life – perpetual loud music! (It's awful to say, but I hate him, because I begged him not to do it and he took no notice at all for 15 years.) One night I couldn't take any more: couldn't sleep, eat, write... So I went down to the Thames thinking I'd throw myself in, and a man of about 30 came up and asked if I had any money. I told him I didn't and – I can see him now – he said, "Sit down." And he told me about himself: how he'd come out of the army, lost job after job, and was living rough. And I thought, "You're living rough, yet you've given me solace." He'll never know it, but he really did save me. Little things like that can become huge things.

'The Rattigan Trust told me, after I'd done a first tentative draft, "Be radical!" So I was'

GA: The press notes mention 'Brief Encounter' as relevant to your scene of Hester on the tube platform, but I was reminded of another David Lean film, 'The Passionate Friends' – which in Claude Rains's performance has as touching a depiction of a cuckold husband as Simon Russell Beale's wonderful playing of William.

TD: Yes, I've seen that film, though I can never remember its title. It does have a lovely, sympathetic performance by Rains, but I'm afraid I really did steal the tube scene – the lights flashing – from *Brief Encounter*. My little homage, if you want it in polite terms!

GA: To some extent Rattigan's play is about a woman in a man's world: husband involved in the law, father in the church, Freddie in the armed services. You don't quite play it that way, because you've invented the scenes with William's mother.

TD: In the 50s there were jobs men did, and jobs women did – that was it. Most people thought, "Now the war's over, life's back to what it was. Women will go home and men will take over the jobs again." And that happened, but the national psyche didn't seem to think it was right any more. But it wasn't just about a man's world – it was hierarchical, so if you were working-class you had a certain sort of job.

GA: What motivated your creation of William's domineering mother?

TD: Well, I wanted to show the luxury Hester leaves behind – William and Hester in her study is another little homage to *Brief Encounter*. I wanted

to show that world as fixed, always 'the ruling class'. But also, about 32 years ago I lived with a girl – I thought the love of a good woman might cure my homosexuality, which of course was not the case! She was illegitimate – her mother had had an affair with a seaman who never came back – but she was lucky in that her working-class family had been supportive.

Anyway, I was taken to meet the mother, and it was the most miserable weekend of my life. She'd had to struggle to buy her house, and it had made her very mean: the lights weren't lit until it was dark, and though it was cold she wouldn't put on the gas fire except very low. I washed up and was told I'd used too much Fairy Liquid. I had a bath and was told I'd used too much water. Everything I did was wrong, so finally I said, "I can't stay here any longer. I'm terrified to do anything."

When the girl and I moved into a flat, the mother gave us £100 to buy a dining-room set. I thanked her for her generosity and she said, "It's not for you. I did it for my daughter." So that's partly where those scenes came from. Also, I recall going about 20 years ago to an upper-middle-class party where one woman said to a girl, "That's a charming dress you have." I thought, "If you feel like that, say nothing." The surface is polite, but underneath it's very nasty.

GA: You even dramatise William's discovery of Hester's adultery, which isn't in the play. You've been fairly free in your adaptation.

← safety briefing. On the platform, Merfield and his team had been busy dressing the near end as 1950, and the far end – for a flashback – as 1940. The wall along the way to the 1940 end was lined with wooden bunks and armchairs that immediately conjure up images of the Blitz.

After the power on the tracks was switched off, the grips got to work constructing a dolly that would run on the rails and carry the crane which – as Florian took time to explain to me – would ensure the smooth flow of the extended master shot they were going for. It represents a flashback to the war: Hester's memory of a man singing 'Molly Malone' at the end of the platform, with everyone else joining in on the chorus, "Alive, alive-oh". The shot starts with a fall of soot caused by bombs landing above, pulls back to reveal children bedded down amidst the tracks themselves, before panning left to take in the shelterers on the platform as they wait out the bombardment and sing along. One of the takes captured immaculate timing on the part of some of the extras, in particular a policeman



strolling down the platform. (It's the take Terence eventually chose.)

Filing out into the fresh air, I joined Sean O'Connor in the lunch-truck queue and, as we shuffled forward, asked how the project started.

"I'd been a friend of Frith Banbury, the play's original director," he told me. "Frith was a friend of Rattigan's, so I was very well aware of how Rattigan took elements of his own life story and put them into this play. Then Karel Reisz did it on stage with Penelope Wilton in 1992 and he made it seem less theatrical and really delved into Hester's character. I was really keen to do it for the Rattigan centenary so I went to the Rattigan estate and [literary agent] Alan Brodie told me to work on it and that he wouldn't

give the rights to anyone else."

"I adore 'Distant Voices, Still Lives' – I know all the lines – so I arranged to meet Terence Davies in a restaurant one lunchtime and he was very entertaining and funny and dry and intelligent. After everyone had left the restaurant but us, he said, 'If you don't mind, I've written the first five pages of the screenplay.' And then he acted them out. He did Hester's voiceover, he did the sound of the gas. He experiences it, and the reason why the shots in his films are so moving is that he fills them with his own emotion."

The post-lunch shot, a close-up of Hester, took place on a much more deserted platform. It was devised partly in tribute to 'Brief Encounter' (1945), using a simple revolving mirror device that David Lean used to simulate the lights of a passing train flashing on a face. I sat with others looking at the monitor. Florian's team needed a stand-in so they could test the technique, and since my teenage daughter Cora was on hand, it was her face that first appeared on the monitor with the lights flashing on her. Minutes later, it was Rachel Weisz doing the

take – a bizarre transition for me from the domestic to make-believe.

Wednesday 1 December 2010 – Crocker's Folly

This was the day I'd been keenly awaiting. I was bussed off to a church hall in St John's Wood, where my costume awaited. I had to have a 1950s-style haircut – a short back and sides with a small quiff at the front. I was then given a nicely baggy pinstripe suit and one of those small Fair Isle cardigans men once tucked their ties into. Ruth Myers's special touch, of which I'd already seen much evidence, was confirmed when she looked me up and down and adjusted my tie by a couple of millimetres. I looked in the mirror and saw a semblance of my long dead father, which – since he and I never got on – was a mild shock. But he was fond of singing in pubs, so in a small way for me this day became a tribute to him.

Crocker's Folly is an extraordinarily ornate pub, crammed with marble, and used these days almost exclusively for film and TV shoots. (It features in more British movies than you can shake a

BELOW THE SURFACE

Rising star Tom Hiddleston tells **Nick James** what attracted him to the role of Freddie in *'The Deep Blue Sea'*

Nick James: Could you give me your take on Freddie, the character you play in *'The Deep Blue Sea'*?

Tom Hiddleston: He is an ex-pilot who fought for the RAF in the Battle of Britain. That lifestyle was high-adrenaline and high-octane. The camaraderie between these guys was extraordinary. Every single time they went up in the air, the stakes were the highest they could possibly be. They would come back at the end of the day sometimes and the pub would be half empty because they had lost half their friends.

So by the time Freddie comes to 1950, he is almost a man out of time, addicted to the thrill of being a pilot, addicted to speed. And there is something about that experience that has shifted his priorities, so he doesn't care about material possessions, about living in a nice big house – he just wants to drive fast down the Great West Road. The war has left a hole in him that he is not prepared to look at. Somewhere in that absence is his grief but, as somebody said, you can't put a whole nation in therapy.

The Battle of Britain is always told as a story with an optimistic, brass-section, triumphalist slant. These people were on motorbikes with wings, with guns on the front, shooting each other out of the sky. It must have been enormously thrilling and very terrifying when you see your best friend falling out of the sky. They seem, in accounts I've read and interviews I've watched, so brave and unsentimental about it, but there is obviously a huge reservoir of pain there, and a feeling of injustice about the randomness of death and who gets chosen. And it's therefore no accident that Freddie has hit the booze since 1945.

NJ: What draws him to Hester?

TH: They recognise each other. The story is about rebellion and the triumph of feeling over propriety – and that's why I love it so much. Somehow, in a world that is more English than our world now – which is all about doing what society tells you to do and what your parents told you to do – it's a two fingers to all those people.

The love between Hester and Freddie breaks through all the barriers of propriety and societal convention. He sees immediately her need for freedom – that inside this corseted, locked character is a very free spirit. And that's apart from her being an unbelievably beautiful woman. And what Hester sees in Freddie is that he is a free spirit too, even though they live in this pre-1960s world where rock 'n' roll hasn't arrived.

NJ: Terence Rattigan's plays feel more relevant now than the 'angry young men' plays that succeeded them. Do you think that might be because some of the rebellions in his plays suit our times better than the they did the 1960s and 70s.

TH: Rattigan seems unafraid of showing what's really going on. This is the surface, now let's



INTO THE DRAWING ROOM
'The Deep Blue Sea' represented a change of pace for Tom Hiddleston following his role in *'Thor'*

explore what I'm really feeling. Even though I'm dressed in this immaculate three-piece suit, my innards are combusting. I was drawn immediately to that.

NJ: How does this particular role measure up to the other films you've been doing recently, such as *'Thor'* and *'War Horse'*? What are the parts of working on a Terence Davies film that give you the most pleasure compared to, say, working on a Spielberg film?

TH: Doing *War Horse* with Steven Spielberg, you are part of an epic canvas, and a lot of my stuff is acting with a horse, and being part of huge sequences with massive stunt battle scenes. But working with Terence on something like this just feels incredibly intimate.

The Deep Blue Sea feels like a story about the mystery of love. It's because of the nature of the writing and Terence's own sensibilities. He is a very poetic man, and will often quote T.S. Eliot at you on set. It is wonderful to work in that way, when we are essentially all turning up to get to the bottom of something very mysterious: the nature of love.

INTIMATE LIGHTING

German DP **Florian Hoffmeister** on creating a distinctive lush brand of naturalism for *'The Deep Blue Sea'*



This film means a lot because Terence took me back to how I started – to that feeling of experiment. When we did our first films, emotion was the benchmark – and that's what makes Terence special, his own emotion. It was very special to

come back, in an industrial environment, to where somebody says, "With me, what I feel, I do. What I don't feel, I don't do."

Terence was adamant about authenticity. I was more drawn at first to kitchen-sink realism. I watched *'The L-Shaped Room'* (1962) etc, but then in prep, when it was his birthday, we watched *'Letter from an Unknown Woman'*, which has a very classy, luxurious feel. I realised that when he referred to naturalism, he still wanted emotionally to have that lushness. I restructured my look accordingly, and that's where the film's softness [of focus] comes from.

We shot most of it on the Panavision Primo lens, but we also searched for some really special old ones from the 70s, going after quite a peculiar look. That's my principal 'voice': authenticity on the one hand, and on the other hand a heightened look. It's not really *cinéma vérité*, but it isn't Douglas Sirk either.

I really liked Terence's approach. [He said], "People only had one lightbulb, so it was very dark, and it was the only lightbulb, and yet it looked beautiful." I tried to come up with an emotional lighting that would correspond. When Freddie comes back home drunk and goes upstairs, he would sit in the dark until Hester came. If you follow that thought through photographically, you sit with two people in a dark room and you won't see the room anymore.

If you watch the film closely, this theme evolves. So the apartment, from being expositional – you know where you are – slowly disappears, and then at the end it comes back, but now looks cold. People comment on [the last scene's] moodiness. I thought about the shot of Rachel. Do I set a backlight? How does the eye look? Is it going to be sharp? If you think of a sharp eye light it becomes a classical movie – she's sitting there in the full period dress, with a red coat on with her hair all done. So I always thought that the light should come from inside her.

The good thing about working in a concentrated manner, as we did on that tight budget, is that the filmmaking process is quite intimate. The mirrors close-up of Rachel on the platform was a straight reference to *'Brief Encounter'*, and that is where the acting and the lighting fall into place together. With Rachel you have an actress who can actually wear that moment. With other people that naturalism might not be delivered – suddenly the lighting would look phony. But Rachel, with her hair blowing and the way she just holds it on screen, is wonderful.

Terence Davies *The Deep Blue Sea*

TD: Very free. The Rattigan Trust told me, after I'd done a first tentative draft, "Be radical!" So I was. Besides wanting scenes of the luxurious life she'd given up, I wanted to show how there are just some days when one gets everything wrong. At the end of the visit to William's mother, Hester phones Freddie, because no matter what she says or does, the weekend's turned against her. And she bungles the call as well. Another case of a small thing having huge repercussions! It's not just adultery that's discovered but deception – that's why William's so wounded. If she'd said, "I'm having an affair. I don't know what to do," he'd have been hurt, but he'd have helped her.

GA: The scenes between Hester and William are very moving. I like how you keep them very simple.

TD: There's a kind of formality, especially when William comes to see her for the first time. But it starts to become intimate when something is said and all those little shared cultural things come back. It's like meeting an old friend you haven't seen for 20 years, and as soon as you see them, within seconds you're back again. I love that!

GA: The play describes Hester as having no pretensions to great beauty, but Rachel Weisz is widely considered rather good-looking. Did you have any concerns that she might be thought too attractive?

TD: Rachel told me, "I don't mind looking ugly," and I said, "Impossible!" But the way she said it was so touching. And it really doesn't matter if an actor's beautiful or not if they're right. That's another part of the play I disregarded. It's like that peculiar direction when it says Hester embraces Freddie in a way that's "almost ugly". I don't know what that means!

But I knew Rachel was right. In a way that beauty can be seen to work against Hester. Obviously, for William it must be lovely to be married



COLD SHOULDER
Heather's husband Sir William Collyer (Simon Russell Beale) loves her in a way she can't reciprocate

to a woman who shares his cultural values and references, who's very intelligent and very beautiful. But the downside is that someone devastatingly handsome can come along, tells her she's gorgeous, and she might fall for him just like that!

GA: Freddie is in many ways cowardly and shallow, but finally almost redeems himself. Did you ever worry he'd simply be dismissed as a cad?

TD: No. I didn't want to judge any of the three main characters. Freddie's not vicious or a sadist; he doesn't enjoy hurting Hester. He says, "You've always said I don't love you in the way you love me, but that's not my fault." And it isn't. William loves her in a way she can't reciprocate, and she loves Freddie in a way he can't reciprocate. He has a sense of honour, and is ultimately a kind man. How would we behave if at the age of 18 or 22 we'd gone on daily sorties where we could be killed and we'd seen friends killed – then suddenly the war's over and we're unimportant? How do you replace that mixture of excitement and terror?

GA: Can you explain your ideas for the look of the film?

TD: I wanted everything to feel well kept but shabby, because that's the way it was then. Our DoP Florian Hoffmeister, our production designer James Merifield and our costume designer Ruth Myers all spoke of colour as metaphor when we first met. As soon as they began talking like that, I knew I was in good hands! I said I wanted the colour slightly smudged, because a lot of those interiors had dark, embossed wallpaper.

Once you know what the look is – and I always do tests – you can decide on the stock and get on with things. And it's the little touches no one will notice – though I know they're there! – which make me proud of all they did. In the pub scene, there are even sandwiches at the back of the bar. James made them the day before so they'd look stale!

■ *'The Deep Blue Sea' is released on 25 November, and is reviewed on page 57*

← pewter mug at.) The myth about this pub has it that owner Frank Cooper bought what was then the Crown Hotel and developed it on the understanding that what became Marylebone Station was going to be built nearby. But when lobbyists had the site moved further away from their exclusive neighbourhood, he committed suicide by jumping off the roof. It's a nice tale, though in reality, I'm told, Cooper died of natural causes.

As the morning passed, there was some inexplicable delay that built the tension until Tom Hiddleston, handsome and dashing in an elegant suit, wandered over to the piano and began to play mood-lifting chords. They were about to shoot one of the film's most romantic scenes, where Hester and Freddie dance in front of the pub's glorious decorative doors to Jo Stafford's 'You Belong to Me'. While the camera turned over, in the other bar – seen minutely through the glass – the extras acted their cloth caps off.

I wandered back to the church hall to check out the extras room. It was a little crowded and very warm (despite sub-zero temperatures outside), and I

quickly learned that the lot of extras is none too thrilling. They were a truly characterful ensemble, but their sleepy conversations, as they sat in costumes they couldn't remove, tended to revolve around how long they'd have to wait and when the next meal break would be.

Realising it would be impossible to rehearse the singing there, I went back to the pub, where they were setting up for the first vocalising scene: an intimate pan across the group of Hester and Freddie and Freddie's ex-RAF pal Jackie Jackson (Harry Hadden-Paton) and his wife Liz (Sarah Kants) as they sing along with the pub crowd's a cappella version of 'You Belong to Me'. I was grouped with a small handful of extras asked to sing off camera. Terence rightly deemed our first efforts feeble. The men were hampered in terms of volume by having to sing in Stafford's high key. Eventually, after much effort, a satisfactory take was achieved, but I realised that we had some extras who were not vocally gifted, a situation that worsened when the main crowd came in.

Fortunately there was one



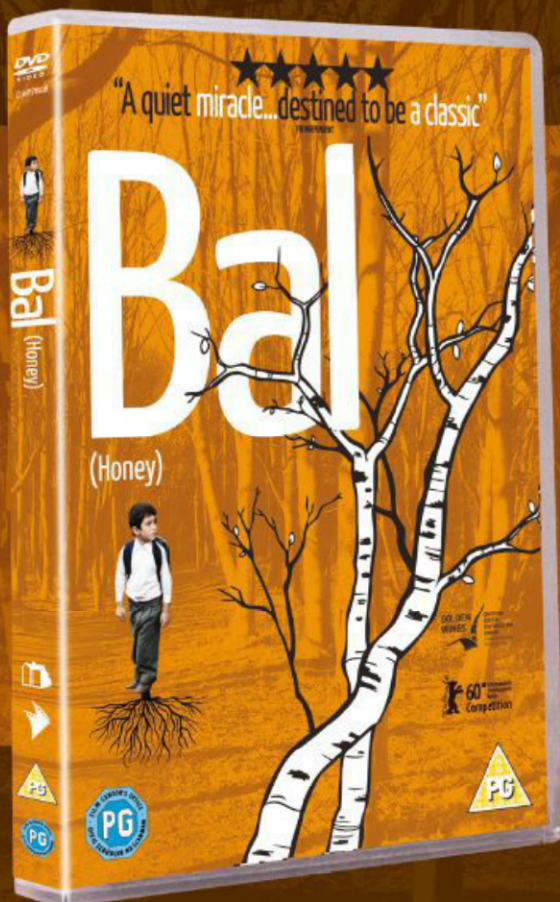
professional singer cast with a small role and he helped me rehearse the now large crowd. The script required us to sing all of Herbert Lawson's 'Any Time', using Eddie Fisher's version as our guide, and then segue straight into one chorus of the post-World War I song 'How You Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Farm'. Lyrics and MP3s had been sent out in advance, but still it was obvious that many of the extras didn't know the songs well enough. We took the group through the songs, and I was beginning to experience the pressure of being on set when the sound recordist arrived next to me and started to record our rehearsals.

Next thing, into the room came Emma Davie with an Empire magazine reporter. He'd come for his 'exclusive'

set visit and seemed bemused and amused to find the editor of Sight & Sound in the room in costume, rehearsing the singing extras.

After a couple of run-throughs Terence himself was standing opposite us. He said, "Your version of 'Down on the Farm' was wonderful" (was he acting?) "but 'Any Time' was awful. People in those days knew these songs by heart and you must too." Among our motley crew, some of the most enthusiastic were the most tuneless, and there were also a couple of veteran jazzbos who sang lustily but got the words wrong every time. Soon, however, we were ushered into place.

In the scene in question, Hester comes into the pub to try to make up with Freddie. I was to stand at the bar beside an actress perched on a stool and sing to her. We belted out several takes and I enjoyed it so much that I barely noticed Rachel Weisz brushing past me each time. Through the genius of the sound recordist these scenes sound, in the finished film, pretty tuneful and authentic. But the main thing for me was that we didn't end up on the cutting-room floor.



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Q. In the opening shot of 'Touch of Evil' what is planted in the car?

- a. Money
- b. A gun
- c. A bomb



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- a. Mel Gibson
- b. Stanley Kubrick
- c. Sam Peckinpah

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Q. Where in London was Chaplin born?

- a. Wandsworth
- b. Walworth
- c. Walthamstow



WIN

RAY HARRYHAUSEN: Five copies of 'Fantasy Scrapbook' to be won

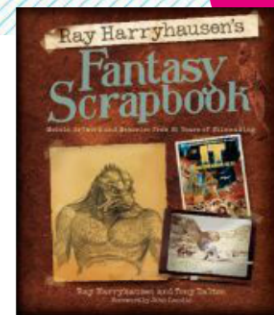
A visual feast for those interested in film animation, *Ray Harryhausen's Fantasy Scrapbook* (published by Aurum Press) reveals a wealth of fascinating material from the famous film animator of classics such as *Jason and the Argonauts* and *One Million Years BC*. Featured herein are several never-before-seen artefacts that were only

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To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

Q. On which one of these films did Harryhausen also receive a writing credit for the story?

- a. The Golden Voyage of Sinbad
- b. Clash of the Titans
- c. Jason and the Argonauts



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HOW TO ENTER

Email your answer, name and address, putting either 'Touch of Evil Blu-ray', 'Charlie Chaplin Collection', 'Controversies books' or 'Ray Harryhausen books' in the subject heading, to s&scompetition@bfi.org.uk.

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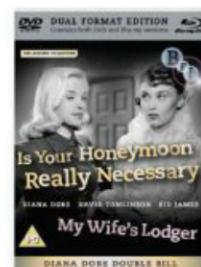
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'Is Your Honeymoon Really Necessary?' is a juicy bedroom farce in which Dors plays the stunning ex who unexpectedly comes back into the life of an American serviceman. In 'My Wife's Lodger' a hapless soldier returns home to find his wife has taken in a boarder.



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Ozu Yasujiro, (1960)
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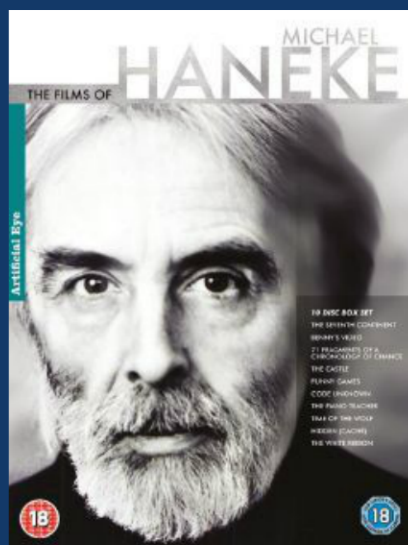
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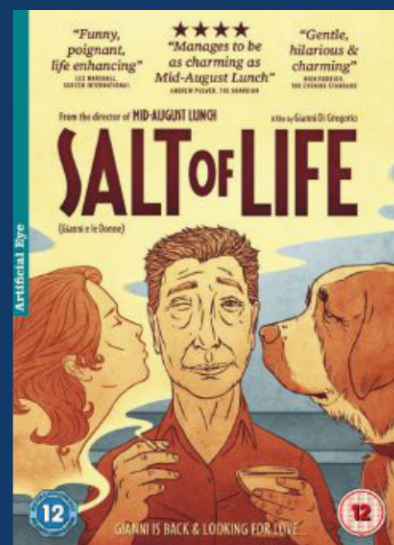
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This deluxe set features ten of Haneke's masterpieces including the Palme d'Or-winning The White Ribbon, 71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance Benny's Video, The Castle, Code Unknown, Funny Games, Hidden, The Piano Teacher, The Seventh Continent and Time of the Wolf.

RELEASED ON DVD 7TH NOVEMBER



Gianni Di Gregorio Salt of Life

Inspired by his friends sexual escapades, Gianni decides to get a girlfriend and reacquaint himself with some of life's little pleasures. Directed by and starring Gianni Di Gregorio, this is a delightful comedy featuring characters from the indie hit Mid-August Lunch.

RELEASED ON DVD 5TH DECEMBER

An American in Paris

ever made, and you could hear its happy audiences planning a return to Paris as soon as they got home. (Some of them were texting about the trip already in the dark.)

There had been early talk about a dramatisation of *An American in Paris*, and rumours that George Balanchine might do it. But in truth the movie world sided with Sam Goldwyn in the belief that – while it was a lovely piece of music, and sure you could imagine the dancers – whatever really happened apart from an American exile falling for a French girl? Then, as Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers went their separate ways in the early 1940s, the ambitious energy of Gene Kelly came into view, with all the highlighted self-discovery of one of his slow, premeditated turns. And Kelly had an example he wanted to talk about.

Can you guess who's telling this story? "*The Red Shoes*... could never have been made in Hollywood in 1947. Hollywood had made films about art and life and love, but I can't remember a single one, and I have total recall. Gene Kelly told me that he ran *The Red Shoes* fifteen to twenty times for different executives at MGM before he got acceptance of his script for Vincente Minnelli's *American in Paris*, and then it was mainly because he had a foreign ballerina for the part – Leslie Caron... The film was a huge success. I never saw it, but Gene told me that it was full of quotes from *The Red Shoes*. Art! But it had Gene Kelly."

Sometimes it's hard to know exactly what Michael Powell recalled, and what he believed. But you know what he felt. And that is crucial to the lengthy ballet sequence within *The Red Shoes*. Even if it hadn't cut shots of Lermontov and Julian Craster into the dance, we know that the ballet is a warning enactment of Victoria's fate. The film is ecstatic, but tragic too; it may be Powell and Pressburger's most exultant celebration of the annihilation in art – not a Hollywood musical but a filmed opera with dance, a melodrama.

An American in Paris too has its extended ballet sequence, which can be appraised as a would-be painter's dream of Paris as seen by Toulouse Lautrec, Utrillo, Dufy and Rousseau. But you have to work hard to place it as one of Minnelli's dream films. The ballet is gorgeous, exquisite, wonderfully clever and certain to win craft Oscars, but it's also as if a Kenneth Clark script for *Civilisation* had been turned over to Bob Fosse. If you want the passion of painting from Minnelli, then you have to wait a few more years for his Van Gogh biopic *Lust for Life* (1956). The boy and the girl in the 1951 film will be bound up in marriage, and they may become patrons of art galleries from LACMA to the d'Orsay. But the ballet is a *tour de force* in which no one has remembered to apply force. Powell's quiet condescension was appropriate, for he had made *The Red Shoes* as a sublime exercise in self-destruction – his heartfelt art – and he knew that he had mingled film, music, dance and story in a way that has never been matched.

An American in Paris won six Oscars: Best Picture (received by Arthur Freed); screenplay, for Alan Jay Lerner; colour cinematography, for Alfred Gilks and John Alton (who shot the ballet); musical scoring; costume, for Orry-Kelly, Walter Plunkett and Irene Sharaff; and art direction, for Cedric Gibbons and three others. (Three years earlier,

The extended ballet can be appraised as a would-be painter's dream of Paris as seen by Toulouse Lautrec and Dufy

The Red Shoes had won for Brian Easdale's score and Hein Heckroth's design – though Jack Cardiff was not even nominated.)

Here to stay

We remember the Gershwin numbers in *An American in Paris* – "S Wonderful", 'I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise', Kelly and the kids doing 'I Got Rhythm'. The original Gershwin music is used for the ballet, but who can recall it? It's my hunch that in recent decades *An American in Paris* has taken retirement while *Singin' in the Rain* is still well-known (figuring in the *Sight & Sound* critics' poll), and treasured for its simple plot motif, and all the fun (and cruelty) of sound taking over the picture business.

Yet one song abides from *An American in Paris*. In the moonlight, on a stone-paved quay on the Seine, under the arc of a bridge, Kelly and Caron have their romantic dance, set to the Gershwins' 'Our Love Is Here to Stay'. You may remember the feeling and the haunting ambivalence of the song:

"It's very clear
Our love is here to stay,
Not for a year,
But ever and a day.
The radio and the telephone
And the movies that we know
May just be passing fancies –
And in time may go.
But oh, my dear,
Our love is here to stay."

The rise and fall of the melody has a gentle grace, but none of the exuberance of young love. Indeed there's a hint in the song – in the music as well as the lyrics – of a sadness that may outlast life itself. This is hardly chance. This song was apparently the last one George Gershwin wrote, just before the sudden onset of a brain tumor at the age of 38 – he went into a coma on Friday and died on Sunday. His brother Ira came to write the lyrics only after George's death. So the gravity and pathos of "but oh, my dear" is deepened by history. Love itself may fade away, with movies and the radio, unless someone good enough decides to write a song about them. I don't know whether George

had presentiments of what was happening to him when he wrote the song. But it feels like it, so the ballet extravaganza – such a dazzling example of Hollywood posh lust – is edged out in the memory by Kelly's grave nostalgia with these lyrics, by the nocturnal tenderness of the dance and the pleated swirl of Caron's white skirt.

So maybe there is more background to the reissue of *An American in Paris* than foreground. Its spectacular version of Art History 101 is out of fashion now, along with the notion that adventurous American minds need to do Paris still. But the idea of the kid in Paris has not died: Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) knew that the theme had become a game – just as no one now could make a movie about a lost sled in a true spirit of enquiry. *Moulin Rouge!* was too busy for some tastes, but it was a rich, fully shaped silent-movie story rendered with a cinematic intensity that Michael Powell would have understood.

Perhaps it's the entire concept of the movie musical that has to be explained now – how did we ever make such silly, carefree beauty? Was it out of an unadorned delight in music and movement? And were we so good at it for 25 years that we then abandoned the notion of movie stories founded in music? There are exceptions, not just the Jacques Demy films or Coppola's *One from the Heart* (1982), but Alan Rudolph's *The Moderns* (1988), one of the best screen portraits of Hemingwayism, and a film so cunningly cross-stitched with music that no one would easily employ the archaic term, 'a musical'.

That may be one reason why if you want to seek out our greatest musical dramatist, you must go not to the movies but to the recordings of stage performances of *Into the Woods*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Follies* and *Sunday in the Park with George*. Stephen Sondheim's reverie on Georges Seurat, come to think of it, is a renewal of that old situation – the American in Paris, a venture that reaches from Thomas Jefferson to Jean Seberg.

■ A digitally restored print of *An American in Paris* is now on rerelease, and plays throughout November at BFI Southbank as part of a two-month season of MGM musicals



PAINTING THE TOWN
The climactic ballet sequence features Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron, left, in studio settings inspired by French painters such as Rousseau



LastExitToNowhere.com

You better watch out. You better not cry.

'Snowtown' dramatises the real-life serial killings uncovered in the eponymous South Australian small town. But far from true-crime sensationalism, it's a gruelling psychological study from first-time director Justin Kurzel. He talks to **James Bell**

ENTER THE VOID

Snowtown is a tiny, unremarkable place about an hour's drive north of Adelaide in South Australia. It should be just another dot on the map, but the mention of its name to people in Australia is likely to resonate with the same dull horror as 25 Cromwell Street might do in the UK, for it was in a disused bank vault in Snowtown in 1999 that the remains of eight murder victims were found stored in barrels. They were among the 11 confirmed killed in the so-called 'Bodies in Barrels' murders perpetrated by John Bunting between 1992 and 1999, helped in some cases by his three accomplices, Robert Wagner, Mark Haydon and Jamie Vlassakis.

Along with the so-called 'backpacker murders' by Ivan Milat in the early 1990s, Bunting's crimes marked the worst recorded case of serial killings in Australian history. What made them all the more distressing was the revelation that the victims had endured prolonged and almost unfathomably cruel torture before they were killed. Bunting's victims all had some connection to the group, and though his spree began as some kind of self-proclaimed mission, targeting those he believed were deserving – paedophiles, gay men and drug addicts, even on the slightest of evidence or accusation – ultimately he simply targeted the weak and vulnerable. He was killing for pleasure.

Justin Kurzel – the director of *Snowtown*, a highly impressive if crushingly bleak film about the events – was born near where Bunting's crimes took place, and had always been fascinated by them. But he was initially hesitant when Warp Films Australia handed him writer Shaun Grant's early draft of the script as a possibility for his debut feature. There had already been a couple of exploitative TV documentaries on the case ("basically just body counts," says Kurzel), and he feared another slasher-movie treatment. But then he read the script.

"I was immediately fascinated by the father-son dynamic at the heart of the script," he says. "It was something I'd had no idea about, despite knowing about the events of the crimes, which had been reported by the Australian media as a bit of a freak show. The idea of a serial killer being a father figure I thought was highly unusual."

The father-son dynamic he's talking about refers to the relationship Bunting had with Jamie Vlassakis, the 16-year-old son of Bunting's partner Elizabeth. A vulnerable woman living with Jamie and her two younger sons in a bleak working-class Adelaide suburb rife with petty crime and stories of sexual abuse, Elizabeth continually turned to different men for support.

Early in Kurzel's film, Elizabeth (Louise Harris) takes up with her neighbour Jeffrey (Frank

Cwertniak), only to discover that while looking after her boys one day he has abused them and photographed them naked. Incensed – but like most locals, mistrustful of the authorities – she turns to John Bunting (Daniel Henshall), a charismatic and affable figure in the community, known for his hatred of paedophiles. John enlists the boys in his campaign to intimidate Jeffrey into leaving the area – writing on his windows, revving his motorcycle outside his door at night, and finally littering his porch with the pieces of a chopped-up kangaroo. The boys all come to view John as a father figure – most of all Jamie (Lucas Pittaway), a quiet, easily manipulated youth who is eventually inducted by John into his spree of torture and murder.

"Shaun's first draft was more of a genre script," recalls Kurzel, "with material on the court case, and a lot on the police procedures. The points of view went from the police to John to Jamie. I thought it would be more interesting if we were to approach the whole story through Jamie's eyes, which I thought was unusual. I hadn't seen many films within this genre that have just taken the point of view of the perpetrators."

Recasting the script so that the events are all seen from Jamie's perspective gives a sense of the claustrophobia of the environment the characters lived in. The result is something closer to what Gordon Burn achieved in his 1998 book on the West family, *Happy Like Murderers*, where detailing a morally warped and self-corrupting social environment from the inside helps explain just how such hideous things could have occurred, away from the notice of the authorities.

Kurzel gives his film a vivid sense of place, the downtrodden neighbourhoods shot with an eerie, magic-hour gothic beauty by DP Adam Arkapaw

'When I experience or see violence in the real world, it's incredibly disorientating and claustrophobic'



(who worked on a number of Kurzel's music videos, and more recently shot David Michôd's hit Australian crime drama *Animal Kingdom*, which the considerably more mature and challenging *Snowtown* has sometimes been compared with). Our immersion in this neighbourhood is further enhanced by frequent cutaways to the objects that are scattered around the drab yards and streets. It's a forgotten place where both hope and rage are impotent – and where someone with John's charisma would seem seductively dynamic.

"Even though this was a small, disaffected community, I wanted it to feel like a kingdom, and John was the king," says Kurzel. "I wanted the experience of watching it to be visceral and claustrophobic, so you're sitting there with Jamie and feeling as though you are as trapped as he was. I wanted the sense you get in great westerns – that hovering menace and the feeling that these towns are completely lost in the desert, and there's only one way in and one way out. There's one man who'll let you enter or leave. Dramatically, it was important that the arrival of John be like a breath of fresh air into this stagnant place. People were convinced by him – by the idea that he was giving them a voice."

Kurzel's casting was cleverly designed to help convey that sense on screen. *Snowtown* was shot at or close to the actual locations, with a cast made up entirely of non-professionals drawn from the same area – with the exception of Sydney resident Daniel Henshall, a TV and stage actor whose magnetic and chilling portrayal of John brings to mind Eric Bana's breakthrough performance in *Chopper*. Just as those around John looked to him for validation and approval, so the non-professional actors look to Henshall, particularly in the group discussions around the kitchen table where John encourages the local people to tell him what they would do if they caught a "pinky" messing with one of their children, manipulating their sense of exclusion and inciting the idea of mob vengeance.

"I wanted this feeling of an outsider coming into this community," recalls Kurzel. "Dan arrived in Adelaide about ten weeks before shooting. He went out with Lucas [Pittaway, the first-time non-professional who gives a remarkably brave performance as Jamie], took the kids camping – behaved like a father figure. That dynamic between him and the other cast was there, and so when it came time to shoot, you could just lean back on it. In itself it was telling the story."

Impending violence

An ever-tightening sense of impending violence hangs over the first hour of *Snowtown*. But because events are depicted from Jamie's perspective, it's only when he is finally drawn into the torture and



murder himself that Kurzel actually shows the horrifying methods the real Bunting and Wagner used. The killing of Jamie's elder half-brother Troy (who in the past sexually abused Jamie repeatedly) is certainly among the most distressing murder scenes ever filmed; it sears itself on to the memory, even though as much is left unseen and suggested as is made explicit.

After Troy has endured horrific torture, Jamie is forced to watch as John's accomplice Wagner repeatedly strangles Troy with a cord and tyre wrench, while John stares into Troy's eyes, instructing Wagner to release him just before the point of death – a sick demonstration of absolute power. Finally Jamie can take no more and steps in to kill Troy himself. It's an act of mercy, but from that point on Jamie is inextricably tied to John as a fellow killer.

"I found the scene so compelling because it's complicated," reasons Kurzel. "It's killing his brother as a mercy killing, and you see the evil of this man [John] to get him to do that. Also there's the backstory of what Jamie had been through at the hands of Troy. It needed to be as close as possible to the truth, I think. In that moment, the audience needs to be close to the car crash.

"I've always admired visceral films, where you're not sitting back watching the violence with a compass," he continues. "To me, when I experience or see violence in the real world, there is no compass – it's incredibly disorientating and claustrophobic, and that's something I wanted that moment to be for Jamie and the audience. Too often I watch films where there's no value to the violence. You're not seeing the cause and effect of what's happening. The scene is interesting because it's both suggestive and explicit – which are both interesting ways to tackle violence. You're asking

TOP DOG

Justin Kurzel, facing page, cast actor Daniel Henshall, above centre, among non-professionals including Lucas Pittaway and Louise Harris, below

yourself, how long do I want to watch this? After that scene, the violence is all suggested. Yet it's the power of that one explicit moment that really propels the rest of the film."

Certainly it would be hard to imagine anyone watching the scene and being titillated in the way one might be in a 'torture porn' horror film. The scene is so tough to watch that many audiences have labelled *Snowtown* a more violent film than it actually is. In fact this is the only killing we see on screen, the rest simply suggested or marked by the playing on the soundtrack of the audio recordings Bunting and Wagner forced their victims to make after torture, telling their families they had gone away.

Those audio recordings sit within the film's haunting, distinctive soundtrack – created by Kurzel's brother Jed – which is crucial to the film's uneasy mood. "We discussed trying to find a rhythm and a pulse for Jamie, and for it to be visceral rather than punctuating moments of emotion or melodrama," Kurzel says. "We didn't

want it commenting on what was happening on screen. So it was a balance, finding this soundscape that worked narratively, but didn't lead you."

Snowtown ends before the group's actions were finally uncovered in 1999, thus denying the audience the justice and resolution a more conventional treatment might have offered. At the trial, Jamie became the star witness for the prosecution, testifying against Bunting and the others, but without being shown this, we're left feeling disorientated by what we have just seen.

"That's how I felt reading the material," says Kurzel. "I'm cynical of those people who have criticised the film for not having a moral resolution, as though to tell you that's why you watched the film. People have wanted answers to 'Why do we kill? What does Bunting tell us about people who kill?' Well, that's something that needs to be debated. The film was always about discussion. If you can somehow find a human point of view to these extraordinary events, then you're taking the audience into a mindset that is really interesting – even if it might be very dark and confronting."

■ *'Snowtown' is released on 18 November, and is reviewed on page 74*



Leaving the council-estate setting of her earlier films for the moors of *Wuthering Heights*, Andrea Arnold has put her own stamp on Emily Brontë's classic, says **Amy Raphael**. Overleaf, **David Jenkins** surveys other screen versions

LOVE WILL TEAR US APART



TRANSGRESSION
Mentions of Heathcliff's dark skin in Brontë's text inform Andrea Arnold's casting of a black actor, James Howson, left, opposite Kaya Scodelario's Cathy, facing page

Well into the first half of Andrea Arnold's *Wuthering Heights*, the young Heathcliff finds himself thrust into the living room of the Lintons' grand house. He has yet to lose his beloved Catherine to Edgar Linton, but he immediately senses the antipathy towards him. He looks around wildly and then spits out the words: "Fuck you all. Cunts." Had these words been uttered by Laurence Olivier back in 1939, or even by Ralph Fiennes more recently, they might have been a little shocking. But it's almost what you expect to hear in Arnold's anti-heritage take on Emily Brontë's 1847 novel.

Not that anyone expected Arnold's third feature to be a dramatisation of a period novel. Her first two films, *Red Road* (2006) and *Fish Tank* (2009), were modern love stories set on council estates. They were memorable for casting unknowns alongside established actors, for their authentic scripts, and for the way they embraced female sexuality (see the graphic cunnilingus scene in *Red Road*, or Michael Fassbender's protracted seduction of his lover's daughter in *Fish Tank*).

Both *Red Road* and *Fish Tank* felt like Andrea Arnold films. But trying to make *Wuthering Heights* her own is a bigger challenge. She casts three unknowns in key roles – Solomon Glave as young Heathcliff; James Howson as older Heathcliff; Shannon Beer as young Cathy – and for much of the film eschews dialogue altogether. The opening pre-title scene shows the older Heathcliff repeatedly slamming his head against a wall. The image then cuts to the wind-lashed moors. There is no soundtrack, no voiceover, just the wind.

Arnold's *Wuthering Heights* is told from Heathcliff's perspective, from the day he is brought from Liverpool to the Earnshaws' remote farmhouse by Cathy's father. Emily Brontë described Heathcliff as resembling a "dark-skinned gypsy" and "a Spanish castaway", but Arnold is the first director to cast a black actor as Heathcliff. Echoing Othello with his hopeless, doomed love for Desdemona, the story thus immediately becomes about race as well as class – particularly since the healed whip marks on Heathcliff's back indicate he may once have been a slave.

Heathcliff says little about his past – he says little about anything – but he is clearly no stranger to anger. When Cathy's skinhead brother Hindley (who wouldn't look out of place in *This Is England*) instructs him to "move in with the animals, where you belong", or Edgar Linton mocks him for being "all dressed up like a circus monkey", Heathcliff lashes out like a semi-feral animal. It's only his love for Cathy that softens him – before turning him into a wild beast once she has rejected him in favour of the foppish but wealthy beta male Edgar.

Arnold, a notoriously reluctant interviewee, talked about *Wuthering Heights* as "seat-of-the-pants filmmaking" in a press conference at the Venice Film Festival in September. She has taken the spirit, the very essence of Brontë's novel and turned it into a 128-minute visual feast. Her regular DP Robbie Ryan, who picked up an award at Venice, lets his camera fall in love with the bleak moors, with birds swooping and soaring, a black beetle scuttling across a leaf, a snow-white goose being plucked, even a pheasant hanging upside down, blood dripping slowly from its eye.



Wuthering Heights

◀ Ryan's cinematography is so poetic it almost steals the film. His imagery captures perfectly the heightened physicality of Cathy's longing for a boy as alienated and isolated as herself. Arguably one of the most potent scenes in the film shows young Heathcliff pinning down young Cathy in the mud in the middle of the moors. Their quasi-savage connection is profound, built on friendship as well as adolescent sexual desire. The camera pulls in and out, lingering on their faces and on their intertwined bodies. There is a love typical of the Romantic novels in which only death can truly consummate a character's passion.

Arnold also uses Ryan's lyrical camerawork to reflect Brontë's love of pathetic fallacy. Previous directors have struggled to tackle the novel's passionate, almost crazed wildness; Arnold, by contrast, is always happy to lean heavily on nature as a symbol of innermost and often unarticulated feelings. We saw it, of course, in *Fish Tank* – the chained-up white horse that symbolises teenage Mia's restricted life; the fish that her mother's boyfriend, Connor, catches with his bare hands, indicating his raw sensuality – and it's here again in spades in *Wuthering Heights*. The endless shots of the sodden moors show us that the connection between the characters and the land runs inextricably deep. The stormy weather constantly reflects and predicts their emotional turmoil. When Heathcliff casually and cruelly hangs a dog by its collar on a gate and leaves it dangling, yelping pitifully, we know it reflects his own feelings, abandoned by Cathy to a life barely worth living.

Arnold's decision to rely so much on visuals rather than words is bold and fascinating. Yet surely, for most people, part of the attraction of the Romantics' writing lies in the prose? The recent version of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, directed by Sin Nombre's Cary Joji Fukunaga and adapted by Moira Buffini, is packed with smart dialogue, particularly when Jane and Rochester first meet and get to know one another. It's edgy, certainly, but much less subversive than Arnold's film.

We are sisters

Fans of the Brontë sisters are famously protective and snobby about reinterpretations of their beloved books. As they are obsessed by the novels, so they seem to exult in their heroines' backstory. Emily Brontë was born in Yorkshire in 1818, the fifth of six children. Her elder sister Charlotte was

'It's gothic, feminist, sadomasochistic, Freudian, incestuous, violent and visceral'

paid £100 for *Jane Eyre*, the first edition of which sold out on publication in 1847. That book's success encouraged a publisher to buy Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, which came out the same year.

A degree of scandal surrounded both books. Aware that in those days it was far easier for men to be published, Emily and Charlotte wrote under the pseudonyms Ellis Bell and Currer Bell. With their younger sister Anne writing as Acton Bell, suspicion was aroused that they were the same man writing under different names. Despite Emily's misgivings, Charlotte confessed to her publisher: "We are three sisters." Between 1848 and 1849, Emily, Anne and their alcoholic brother Branwell all died; Charlotte died in 1855 at the age of 38. But over 150 years later, the sisters' work continues to be widely read and furiously analysed, while fans from around the world make pilgrimages to Haworth Parsonage, the Brontës' home on the Yorkshire moors. The relative merits of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are endlessly debated, as are those of the various adaptations.

There have been dozens of stage and screen productions based on or around *Wuthering Heights* (see opposite), from the left-field (Yoshida Yoshishige's 1988 version replaces the Yorkshire moors with a volcanic holy mountain in Japan) to the ridiculous (Cliff Richard in Tim Rice and John Farrar's 1996 musical *Heathcliff* – truly subversive, if you think about it). Monty Python even satirised the novel in 1970 with 'The Semaphore Version of *Wuthering Heights*', a short and brilliant sketch.

It's easy enough to mock the fierce, simple purity of *Wuthering Heights* – orphaned boy falls hard for girl he ultimately loses to posh boy – but the Romantics embraced complex, quotidian themes in their work, from tragic romance and passion to class and the social conditions of the day. The success of Arnold's film is that she sees Heathcliff as the Byronic hero he is: wild as the moors themselves, rebellious, passionate and also, as the story progresses, a boy lost in a man's body. Her *Wuthering Heights* is brutal, violent and – at times – formidable. It's also a visual delight, which

takes huge risks by minimising the dialogue. But the screenplay, co-written by Arnold and *Girl with a Pearl Earring* scriptwriter Olivia Hetreed, isn't always as sharp as it could be. There's a scene towards the end where Edgar says, "You have to choose, Cathy, between him or me." It seems for a moment as though the editor has unwittingly spliced in a GCSE improv drama session.

It's also a film of two halves. As the young Heathcliff and the young Cathy, Solomon Glave and Shannon Beer truly shine. Glave in particular is outstanding, his young body displaying the agony of unrequited love and the coiled fury of the anti-hero. By utterly trusting Arnold, Glave and Beer have abandoned all inhibitions; the lack of dialogue works in the first half simply because their performances are so physical, visceral and instinctive. Yet as soon as the older Heathcliff (James Howson) turns up looking like Jimi Hendrix and we then meet the older Cathy (Kaya Scodelario), who is beautiful but oddly shallow, the energy on the screen seems to fall away. Howson lacks Glave's melancholy, and his anger is unconvincing; if anything, he underplays Heathcliff's profound pain. Scodelario, meanwhile, seems neither haunted nor demented as a result of marrying the wrong man; she seems to float towards her death rather than succumb to it.

The film's relentless bleakness isn't a problem. But the ending is oddly cold. Watching young Heathcliff lie, Christlike, on the sodden moors is deeply moving; watching him do the same as an adult is far less engaging. The disturbing scene in which older Heathcliff lies on top of Cathy's dead body and appears to be having sex with her shatters the idea that their relationship remains so pure because it is unfulfilled, unconsummated.

Yet despite such misgivings, *Wuthering Heights* is an important piece of filmmaking – and at times a great one. It may, ultimately, be Robbie Ryan's film, but it is Arnold's vision that makes the first half so vital. The director, who has often talked about being inspired by fly-on-the-wall documentaries, has said that she never liked the idea of adaptations, and surprised herself by agreeing to take on *Wuthering Heights*. "It's gothic, feminist, socialist, sadomasochistic, Freudian, incestuous, violent and visceral. Trying to melt all that together into a film is an ambitious and perhaps foolish task," she has admitted.

Foolish, perhaps, but admirable all the same. Arnold is hugely brave to have even had a go at reinterpreting a Romantic classic. She is suitably irreverent in her anti-heritage attitude, and yet it's clear she loves and respects the novel. At the same time she has truly attempted to tear up the rule book for adapting period novels, and in this sense her film is closer to the wild, brutal beauty embodied by *Wuthering Heights* and the Romantics. It might have been interesting to see her be really daring and cut out dialogue altogether – but then the film probably wouldn't have been financed. Still, it deserves to be celebrated for what it is – and most of all for its audacious punk ethos. When it works, it's as exciting as hearing the Sex Pistols' 'God Save the Queen' for the first time.



ROUGH HEWN
Fresh performances by unknowns Solomon Glave, left, as young Heathcliff, and Shannon Beer, right, as young Cathy set the tone for Andrea Arnold's adaptation

■ 'Wuthering Heights' is released on 11 November, and is reviewed on page 82

HEIGHTS OF FASHION

David Jenkins surveys the range of film versions of Emily Brontë's classic, from Hollywood to Mexico to Japan



Wuthering Heights (William Wyler, 1939)

Bar a 1920 silent filmed by British director A.V. Bramble, now considered lost, William Wyler's full-bore Hollywood melodrama stands as the first important screen version of Brontë's masterwork. Even though Laurence Olivier's lantern-jawed Heathcliff doesn't exhibit the simultaneous shades of dark and light that permeate later incarnations of the character, Wyler's film boasts a heady gothic style informed by German expressionism, snappy pacing (courtesy of the screenplay by Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur and an uncredited John Huston) and a genuine understanding of the kind of romance that would blossom in this sort of domestic setting. If there's a through-line from Wyler's film to Andrea Arnold's verbally spare new 'Wuthering Heights', it's that both make sublime use of pregnant pauses: in the 1939 film, when Cathy makes an instinctive rendezvous with Heathcliff on their secret ledge, there's almost 30 seconds of silence before the couple prance off to "collect heather".



Abismos de pasión (Luis Buñuel, 1954)

Buñuel originally wrote the screenplay for his version of Brontë's novel in 1931, but was only finally able to shoot it during his exile in Mexico. A psychodrama delivered at fever pitch, his film has the central amour fou between Cathy and Heathcliff (renamed "Catalina" and "Alejandro") beset on all sides by class and religious hectoring. Buñuel cunningly begins his version midway through the text, leaving the blissful nurturing of the pair's love as context to be inferred from the violent machinations of Alejandro's return from exile. The religious overtones are overt, with Alejandro constantly referred to as a "devil" (an epithet that's mischievously echoed in his dagger-like sideburns) and the moral superiority expressed by Catalina's vile, butterfly-killing husband Eduardo (Ernesto Alonso) and Isabel (Lilia Prado), the woman Alejandro marries as an act of revenge. Laced with the director's typically acerbic humour (an ominous opening shot has a wake of buzzards

perching on a crooked tree), it also contains one of his most potent dream sequences, a climactic vision of everlasting love that transmutes into death and damnation at the sound of a gun blast.



Hurlevent (Jacques Rivette, 1985)

Rivette's subtly erotic spin on the material sits at an interesting juncture in his career, recalling as much the starched meta-melodrama he had his characters magically observe in 'Céline and Julie Go Boating' (1974) as the fraught private flirtations that make up the backbone of his recent Balzac adaptation 'Don't Touch the Axe' (2007). Transplanted to the verdant idyll of the Cévennes region during the early 1900s, 'Hurlevent' features assured performances from Fabienne Babe (as a sultry Catherine) and Lucas Belvaux (as a taciturn "Roch"), who manage to bring both a theatrical precision and a graceful spontaneity to their complex roles. It's filmed simply in cosseted, cramped interiors, but this approach yields dramatic riches by forcing the lovers into close proximity, while also creating a powerful contrast with the rapturous scenes of the couple's illicit hillside frolics, which are almost ecstatic in their lyricism, heightened by the evocative use of traditional Bulgarian choir music on the soundtrack.



Arashi ga oka (Yoshida Yoshishige, 1988)

Yoshida's idiosyncratic rendering of Brontë's novel is cut from the same delirious cloth as Kurosawa's lauded literary reconfigurations 'Throne of Blood' and 'Ran'. To give a sense of the tone, the film is bookended with shots of characters having their arms severed with samurai swords, and there's even a prolonged fight sequence halfway through in which the foundling Heathcliff character (named "Onimaru" and played with lunatic relish by the late Japanese tough guy Matsuda Yūsaku) takes down a gang of peasants with a length of bamboo. Deliberately paced and ornately photographed, Yoshida's ultra-pessimistic reading suggests that only through death can we really understand the extent of love. Much of

the running time is dedicated to chronicling Onimaru's grotesque reaction to the passing of his lover "Kinu" (Tanaka Yūko), which includes an attempted rape of their young daughter and regular visits to molest her desiccated corpse. The film climaxes with a swordfight on the slopes of a volcano.



Wuthering Heights (Peter Kosminsky, 1992)

Despite refusing to lapse into mawkish melodrama, the feature debut of lauded British TV director Peter Kosminsky feels hamstrung by its source material. Along with 'Arashi ga oka', it's the only film version to attempt drag the entire book on to the screen, yet the story's two-part structure serves only to lessen its power as a piece of cinema (unlike, say, Buñuel's abridged but thematically focused version). Juliette Binoche is poorly cast as both Catherine Earnshaw – a mess of giggles and dodgy French inflections who, for reasons that are hard to fathom, accepts the advances of blow-dried fop Edgar Linton (Simon Shepherd from 'Peak Practice') – and their daughter Cathy Linton. Ralph Fiennes makes his suitably intense feature debut as Heathcliff, but though the acting and dialogue are passably robust, Kosminsky displays little definable visual sense as a director.



MTV's Wuthering Heights (Suri Krishnamma, 2003)

A deservedly obscure blemish on the learn-while-you-watch cycle of literary classics retooled as teen high-school capers (1999's 'Cruel Intentions' appears to be a key inspiration). "Heath" is now an angular, Chippendale-like emo rock prodigy, "Kate" a willowy singer who likes late-night dirt-bike rides down the shoreline, and Wuthering Heights (dubbed "The Heights") a stucco lighthouse in the OC. Largely dispensing with the unworkable class rift between Kate and Heath (thereby negating a key theme in the book), the script reads like bowdlerised York Notes as polished by a second-tier celebrity blogger. Rather than examine a love that transcends time and space, the finale is chiefly concerned with whose baby Kate is holding.



FAUST AND FURIOUS

A surprise winner of the top prize at the recent Venice Film Festival, Aleksandr Sokurov's *Faust* has divided critics, leaving some groping for superlatives. Here **Ian Christie** places the film in the context of European high culture's previous tellings of the tale – and of the Russian director's other, varied works, now showing in a BFI retrospective



LOVE OR POWER
Faust (Johannes Zeiler, both pics), left with Gretchen (Isolda Dychauk), and opposite with the Moneylender (Anton Adasinsky)

Aleksandr Sokurov's *Faust* has opened a real can of worms. The news that it had won the Golden Lion at Venice provoked instant reaction, much of it incredulous, some downright hostile. Hollywood stars and popular commercial films had been snubbed. Worse still, snubbed by a jury headed by the American director Darren Aronofsky. And in favour of what: a high-concept art film? Pretentious stuff, after Cannes giving the Palme d'Or to Terrence Malick's demanding and no less divisive *The Tree of Life*.

And yet, wasn't this Venice reasserting its original role as the oldest film festival in the world, added to the city's existing Biennale in 1932 to show 'cinematographic art' within the wider framework of the other arts? In Sokurov's case, we might also recall how, 49 years ago, Venice proclaimed the emergence of another Russian master, Andrei Tarkovsky, with the Golden Lion for his first feature *Ivan's Childhood*.

Sokurov, however, is no debutant – and nor can he still be pigeonholed as 'Tarkovsky's heir'. Indeed he's probably the most prolific of all contemporary filmmakers, with a non-stop output of features,

documentaries and highly personal film-poems. For *Variety*'s reviewers, he's mannered, tedious and not a barrel of 'laffs'. But the Venice award prompted some stirring responses. Nigel Andrews, writing in the *Financial Times*, declared himself "exalted and astonished" by Sokurov's film, and hailed it as "complete, magical and accessible to all". And writers in the blogosphere have reached heights of rhetoric to convey their mixed emotions: "a grueling, attenuated pre-modernity right down to the marrow of *Faust*, as though narrativity itself were being etched in acid before you" (Michael Sicinski); "wheezing human-blob in a glass, a steaming geyser piercing through an ashen purgatory" (Fernando F. Croce); and "like being trapped in an elevator with Terry Gilliam's id" (Guy Lodge).

That last might seem quite relevant, since the most recent manifestation of Gilliam's baroque imagination was his widely acclaimed production of Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust* earlier this year for the English National Opera. But the main thing Gilliam's *Faust* had in common with Sokurov's is a willingness to tackle boldly one of the great European subjects, undaunted by the reverence that has accumulated around its main monument – the

vast philosophical drama that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe laboured on for over 40 years, between 1790 and his death in 1832. Part of the problem facing Sokurov's *Faust* is indeed our relative unfamiliarity with Goethe in Anglophone culture, which is partly down to having our 'own' Faust in the shape of Christopher Marlowe's punchy Elizabethan firecracker *Doctor Faustus*.

It's that version of the tale, drawing on earlier folk versions, that seems to have shaped the most notable modern Faust on film: Jan Svankmajer's ferocious 1994 combination of live action and puppetry. Svankmajer's Faust is given a map in the street in modern-day Prague, which leads him – like Alice (the subject of Svankmajer's previous feature) – into a labyrinth of the bizarre. Like Marlowe's hero, he wants Mephistopheles to amaze and gratify him, and the angels and demons are a palpable presence, with the hallucinatory puppet theatre that originally nourished Svankmajer's imagination recalling the intimate theatre for which Marlowe wrote. And for these everyman Fausts, the salvation that Goethe offered – in the shape of Gretchen – is not an option.

When Goethe as a young man first mapped out what was to become his main creative work, he envisaged an epic treatment that would begin in heaven and ultimately return to somewhere beyond the earthly setting of the central drama. Like Marlowe's hero, his Faust is tempted by the devilish Mephistopheles, and signs away his soul in return for knowledge and power. But apart from the greater density of the social setting for this Faust, the crucial difference is the love interest, represented by Gretchen. In Goethe, Faust manages to seduce the innocent Gretchen and kill her brother, before abandoning her with their child. After Gretchen drowns the baby, she's condemned to death and Faust tries to save her; but even though she rejects his help, there's the promise of heavenly salvation.

Goethe's *Faust* didn't just become the cornerstone of German literature in the Romantic period, it also inspired the 19th century's single most popular opera, composed by Charles Gounod in 1859. And naturally for Gounod and his librettists, it was the melodramatic aspects of Goethe that offered scope for building a successful Romantic vehicle. Without Faust's courtship gift of jewels to Marguerite (as Gretchen becomes in this version) and the final rendezvous in her cell, there wouldn't have been the opportunity for generations of singers to strut their stuff.

Cormac Newark writes in a recent programme note that George Bernard Shaw, who was a music critic before becoming a playwright, complained that critics had to spend ten years of their lives watching Faust – and would have caught "the inflammatory disease Faustitis" if Gounod's music hadn't been so "seraphically soothing". The statistics are indeed staggering: Faust clocked up 2000 performances in less than a century in Paris, was staged at Covent Garden every season for 50 years, and figures in countless works of fiction from *The Phantom of the Opera* to *The Age of Innocence* and even *Tintin as the opera*. (And for those who want to check for themselves, the New York Metropolitan Opera production will be shown on cinema screens around the world on 10 December).

If this arch-Romantic operatic *Faust* became a cliché, it's important to remember how far removed it was from Goethe's drama of the human

◀ soul, described by the aged poet as “tormented by all that afflicts mankind, repelled by all that it finds repellent, and made happy by all that it desires”. And what Sokurov has done is to plunge us into a teeming middle-European milieu that seems extraordinarily close to the one Goethe imagined. This *Faust* is neither an aged lecher nor a would-be Lothario. In Johannes Zeiler’s selfless performance, he’s an earnest seeker after knowledge, part alchemist and part scientist, a worrier who feels that life is passing him by. The moneylender he visits turns out to be his Mephistopheles, an extraordinary prancing, epicene creation by the Russian performance artist Anton Adasinsky. Together they move through the extraordinary landscape that’s had critics flexing their vocabulary to evoke its sensory extravagance.

Sokurov has always been a filmmaker of immense and intense visual invention – as will become apparent to anyone following BFI Southbank’s retrospective through November and December. From the antique-shop jumble of his George Bernard Shaw fantasy *Mournful Indifference* (aka *Heartbreak House/Anaesthesia Psychica Dolorosa*, 1987) and the bleached apocalyptic landscape of *Days of the Eclipse* (*Dni zatmeniya*, 1989), through the contrasting painterly settings of *Mother and Son* (*Mat i syn*, 1997) and *Moloch* (1999), he has created highly distinctive visual worlds. In many ways, his best-known film *Russian Ark* (*Russkiy kovcheg*, 2002) is also his least typical, as it mostly features the decor of St Petersburg’s Hermitage Palace (although with some deft digital enhancement). And while he’s capable of working with the simplest tools and settings, especially in some of the highly personal ‘elegies’ that provide a counterpoint to his feature-film career, he is not afraid to embrace the opportunity for comprehensive ‘world building’ that digital cinema now offers.

Hence, no doubt, the choice as cinematographer for *Faust* of Bruno Delbonnel, best known for his work on such stylised films as *Amélie* and Julie Taymor’s *Across the Universe*, as well as *Harry Potter*

and the *Half-Blood Prince*. Sokurov has clearly been encouraged to broaden his palette by his producer Andrei Sigle who, unusually, is also a composer, and has here created a soundscape that weaves together medieval German music, Wagner, Tchaikovsky and Sokurov’s beloved Mahler. When Sigle claims for the film that “the lighting, colour, space, pauses and breathing in some sequences create an absolutely unusual spectacle”, this is more than production hype. *Faust* does indeed create a world as magical and mysterious as any recent mass-market fantasy film; and in doing so it evokes the tremendous range of references and detail that Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau brought to his great silent *Faust* of 1926 – the film, incidentally, that led to him being given *carte blanche* in Hollywood.

Will to power

But the most intriguing question that’s now up for discussion is how *Faust* – which completes Sokurov’s ‘tetralogy of power’ – relates to the director’s previous three films about infamous political leaders of the early 20th century. The linking theme had seemed to be an exploration of how ‘unhappy people’ can create unhappiness on a vast scale, as in the case of Hitler (*Moloch*, 1999) and Lenin (*Taurus*, 2001), both of whom are seen in their private lives as diminished, almost pathetic characters. With *The Sun* (*Solntse*, 2005), Sokurov’s equally intimate portrait of the last days of Hirohito’s rule as god-emperor, he seemed to be dealing with the confrontation between the mythic and the mundane – in a way not dissimilar to Scorsese’s treatment of the Dalai Lama in his underappreciated *Kundun*. There had been speculation about another biographical film to complete the tetralogy, but few can have expected this leap into a fully realised period myth.

Sokurov has spoken of *Faust* as continuing to “delve into everything that is dark in man”, and exploring “a pathological unhappiness in everyday life”. But the most striking difference, as

he observes, is that the other rulers are shown confronting their own mortality, while Faust – true to Goethe’s vision – is forgiven his blasphemous pact and offered power. In Sokurov’s words – and even more in the film’s final, transcendent images – “he walks off in order to become a tyrant, a political leader, an oligarch”. Are we then to see *Faust* as probing the roots of the superman or übermensch that Nietzsche celebrated in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which would later be distorted by 20th-century tyrants?

Goethe was not only a poet but a polymath and politician who tried to balance Enlightenment rationalism with a rising tide of Romanticism. When he began exploring the Faust legend, he claimed to have no idea where it would lead; by the time he reached Faust’s final experiences beyond space and time, the play had become a mystical celebration of redemption and renewal where “Earth’s insufficiency... finds fulfilment.” Granted that Sokurov’s *Faust* doesn’t claim to be faithful to Goethe, there’s no mistaking how closely it locates this struggling scientist, seen carrying out gory dissection on a corpse and peering through a telescope at the moon, in the liminal world that the Enlightenment sought to rationalise.

Goethe’s Faust craves knowledge and fulfilment to become a superior being, which leads to the famous Faustian bargain with the devil, for which he is punished but also partially forgiven. But for Nietzsche, God is dead and so too is the Devil. What remains is the drive towards ever greater power – as he says mockingly in *Zarathustra*, “I suspect you would call my Superman a Devil.” By returning to this most often invoked myth that speaks to our post-Enlightenment world, Sokurov is trying to address the ‘will to power’ that he sees still at work in the post-communist world. The theme is universal, but a veteran Russian critic, Valery Kichin, has been quick to characterise this Faust in Russian terms: “Faust in Sokurov’s interpretation is absolutely devoid of any romantic features. He is a cynic and a hard-core utilitarian of the post-Soviet time when people were ready to step over corpses in order to achieve their goal with a cynic conviction that they knew how to change the world.”

Does this talk of politics and philosophy make him sound like an earnest bore? Well, it shouldn’t, since *Faust* shows Sokurov at the height of his ambition as a filmmaker. Impelled by the same restless curiosity as Rossellini – in his great series of films about philosophers – or the sadly missed Raúl Ruiz – boldly creating new filmic forms to explore art, politics and ideas – Sokurov is surely one of the brightest hopes for believing that cinema can still achieve its full potential as a form of ‘total art’. He himself has often spoken in the past about film as a minor art, subsidiary to the older traditions of literature and painting. But with *Faust* he has shown cinema capable of – and this may seem blasphemous, or just pretentious – standing alongside Goethe. As Darren Aronofsky said in Venice: “There are films that change you forever and this is one of them.”

Aleksandr Sokurov has spoken of ‘Faust’ as continuing to “delve into everything that is dark in man”



■ An Aleksandr Sokurov retrospective plays throughout November and December at BFI Southbank, London



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Restored scenes omitted from the original 1979 cut have added a new dimension to Volker Schlöndorff's award-winning adaptation of Günter Grass's 'The Tin Drum' — as have revelations about the novelist's wartime past. **Geoffrey Macnab** reports

LITTLE VOICE

The little drummer boy with the voice that shatters glass is back. Oskar Matzerath (David Bennent), the precocious narrator and protagonist of *The Tin Drum* (*Die Blechtrommel*), can be seen — and heard — again in a new extended cut of Volker Schlöndorff's 1979 film, which in its day won both the Palme d'Or at Cannes and the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film.

Oskar is the boy who refuses to grow up. The child of a petit bourgeois couple living in Danzig on the eve of World War II, he decides on his third birthday to stunt his own growth. Though his mind matures, he stays in his three-year-old body, witnessing society's upheavals as the Nazis come to power. And he has an unusual power: when he screeches, glass shatters.

Published in 1959, *The Tin Drum* was Günter Grass's first novel. The first part of the Danzig trilogy (which continued with *Cat and Mouse* and *Dog Years*), it provoked huge controversy, even as it became a bestseller. "I remember the uproar, first of all for a certain crudity in the way of depicting sex scenes," recalls Schlöndorff, who was 20 at the time. "But that was also why the book sold — these were the pages that people would read first. Also it was its pitiless portrayal of the [German public's] enthusiasm for the Nazis that made the book so shocking. Almost everybody said, 'No, we were forced to be Nazis.' [Grass] was immediately considered an unperson."

ORDINARY ATROCITIES

The film views Nazi Germany through the eyes of Oskar (David Bennent), who is mute but in one new scene, top right, directly addresses the audience





KOBAL COLLECTION/©

MARCHING TO A DIFFERENT DRUM

A truckload of unwanted film cans inspired Volker Schlöndorff to revisit 'The Tin Drum', he tells **Geoffrey Macnab**



Geoffrey Macnab: Why have you made a director's cut of 'The Tin Drum' now?

Volker Schlöndorff: We knew that it had been sitting there in the lab for all these years. At the time [in 1979], we had strict limits – two hours 15 minutes – from United Artists in the distribution deals worldwide. That's what we conformed to. It was my cut – nobody changed anything. Since it was successful, we were happy with it. Then last summer the lab in Berlin called. They were about to discard all the material. They said, "Either you take the cans" – which would be a truckful – "or else we dispose of it."

GM: How easy was it to add the extra footage?

VS: I had my working copy of the screenplay. Each take had its number [so] I could tell which shots we needed. They were transferred on to video and I could view them. It was very emotional to see all these actors, who remain my friends. I am used to their faces of today and all of a sudden I'm seeing them in their prime.

The editing itself went fairly well. I wondered why we didn't fight more at the time to include [the extra footage]. But two hours 15 was long in those days. Today it is almost short. One problem was that with the negative there was no sound – someone had thrown it away. But we were able to ADR [automated dialogue replacement] it – to lip-synch it again. David Bennent's voice was the biggest problem, but it is so amazing what they can do with computers today.

GM: Since you made 'The Tin Drum', films such as 'Downfall' have been seen by some as landmarks

DRUM MAJORS

Volker Schlöndorff, right, with Günter Grass, left, and David Bennent on the set of 'The Tin Drum'

in Germany's process of confronting of its Nazi past. To what extent is this really a new phenomenon in German cinema?

VS: You wouldn't know the films, because they didn't survive, but German cinema of the 50s was dealing with this – and exculpating. There were all these melodramas about displaced soldiers and refugees – very self-justifying.

GM: You were born in 1939 so, like Oskar, you grew up during World War II. Did your own childhood experiences echo his in any way?

VS: My father had served in World War I. He must have been almost 50 when the war broke out. He just followed his routine as a doctor. We lived in an industrial suburb of the city of Wiesbaden.

In '44 we were bombed out. The house was just an empty shell. We moved into the woods, into a log house, and the next thing I knew the war was over. [After] the last haggard and gaunt German soldiers – there was nothing glorious left of that army – in came the wonderful, youthful American GIs with all their beautiful machines and equipment.

I remember that very, very well. For me, this was a new period, a new age. We children ran over to the enemy, so to speak. We considered them our natural allies because they won over our fathers. After that, the German society of pre-1945 never had a chance with us.

Scabrous and funny, mixing fantasy and realism, *The Tin Drum* is one of the key German novels of its era. "It is not too audacious to assume that *The Tin Drum* will become one of the enduring literary works of the twentieth century," the Swedish Academy proclaimed when Grass was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1999. The Academy praised the way that Grass's "frolicsome black fables portray the forgotten face of history". Schlöndorff's film version, in turn, was rapturously received on its release in 1979. Grass himself admired the way the director "delted into the heart of the subject", adding: "I saw straightaway that he had understood the epic dimensions of the book."

What's intriguing about the resurfacing of *The Tin Drum* in an extended cut is how much has changed in the 30 years since its premiere. Germany is, of course, reunified. Informed audiences know that Grass, in his 2006 memoir *Peeling the Onion*, made a shock confession: at the end of the war, as a teenager, he had been a member of the Waffen SS. How should this knowledge affect our response to the novel and the film it inspired? Were we duped into reading a caustic allegory about the rise of the Nazis written by someone who, however briefly, was a member of an elite Nazi organisation?

"Grass said he did speak about it in the late 1950s and nobody seemed very interested, so he didn't insist on it," Schlöndorff points out now. "It's a kind of lying by omission. Our first reaction was that he'd been lying to us. He said, 'No, guys, I haven't been lying. Everybody knew I had been there. Whether this was an SS group or any regular infantry division, in these last days of the war it didn't make any difference.' But it came as a shock to me."

So Grass has been lambasted again, just as he was when his novel was first published. In the late 1950s he was attacked for writing in too brazen and open a way about the Nazi era. Ironically, half a century later, he stands accused of being furtive and misleading. Reviewers of *Peeling the Onion* accused him of bad faith. "I do not understand how someone can elevate himself constantly for 60 years as the nation's bad conscience, precisely in Nazi questions, and only then admit that he himself was deeply involved," said the renowned historian Joachim Fest (whose book *Inside Hitler's Bunker* was the basis of the 2004 hit *Downfall*).

However, as Schlöndorff points out, Grass's feelings of guilt were partly what drove him to write *The Tin Drum* in the first place: "He has been his

ADDING A BEAT

Additions to the extended director's cut of 'The Tin Drum' include whole new scenes, right, and archive footage of key events of the Nazi era

own exorcist, like a lot of artists, through this trilogy and especially in this character of Oskar, who is clearly a little schizophrenic. This is Grass's own childhood, except that he grew. But the parents and the whole relationship and the uncle and the neighbours and the spirit of the period – that's what he grew up in and that's how he ended up wanting to partake in the war." And besides, the whole point about Oskar – like his creator – is that he is an unreliable narrator.

Schlöndorff's film captures much of the novel's picaresque energy and surrealism. It opens wonderfully, with Oskar's grandmother Anna (played as a younger woman by Tina Engel) sitting in a muddy field in "the heart of Kashubia" and heating potatoes. When Joseph Koljaiczek (Roland Teubner) appears with policemen pursuing him, Anna allows him to hide under her skirts. This is how she is impregnated, thus conceiving Oskar's mother. The jerky movements of the characters invoke memories of hand-cranked silent films, Oskar's voiceover and the unearthly Maurice Jarre music adding to the strangeness of the scene.

Opening out

The new director's cut of *The Tin Drum* includes over 20 minutes of scenes Schlöndorff was obliged to cut from the 1979 original in order to reduce the running time, plus snippets of archive footage intended to show key events at the beginning of the war. With the running time now increased to 163 minutes, it's not so much a radical rethink as Schlöndorff clarifying and enlarging the 1979 cut.

One newly added scene – playing like something from a Tinto Brass film – dramatises a moment early in the novel when Oskar describes his fascination with a book called *Rasputin and Women*. The film shows Oskar's teacher Gretchen (Ilse Pagé) reading the boy a story about an orgy; she is joined by Oskar's mother (Angela Winkler). As both women grow increasingly excited, Oskar slips away unnoticed and opens a pair of curtains to reveal the orgy scene in full bloom, with Rasputin (played by the film's co-screenwriter, Jean-Claude Carrière) surrounded by scantily dressed nuns and grand duchesses. Oskar looks him in the eye and then turns towards the camera.

"That's fun because he [Oskar] always speaks off screen," says Schlöndorff. "In the narration, he sometimes speaks of himself in the third person and sometimes in the first. But you don't really know where this voice is coming from. Here, all of a sudden, he speaks into the camera. The fact that

A key difference between the likes of 'Downfall' and 'The Tin Drum' is that Schlöndorff is old enough to have lived through the war

he is there reflecting on himself on screen provides the whole perspective to the story he is telling. I guess we were scared to include it at the time!"

There is a tension at the heart of *The Tin Drum* – and a good reason why we don't see Oskar speaking: he is pretending to be a three-year-old boy. If he reveals how articulate he really is, his cover will be blown. But in the narration he is astute, mournful and worldly-wise. "You see a child, but this child has the brain of a grown-up," Schlöndorff explains. "The character of this voice – this shrieking, angry little voice – is the opposite of what you expect."

David Bennent, who was 12 when he appeared in the film (and who rerecorded some dialogue for the new version), gives an eerie and affecting performance. He looks like a doe-eyed child, but has maturity and an aloof quality. When he's not shattering glass, his behaviour is more restrained than that of the adults around him, including his two father figures: his mother's grocer husband Alfred Matzerath (Mario Adorf), who becomes an enthusiastic Nazi, and Oskar's heroic uncle Jan Bronski (Daniel Olbrychski), who takes part in the defence of the Polish post office in Danzig in 1939 – one of the first battles of World War II.

The second new scene, showing Matzerath rebelling against the Nazis, strikes a discordant note, however. Appalled that functionaries from the Nazi Race Bureau want to take away his son as part of their euthanasia programme, he blusters against its plans. But this late change in attitude feels forced. A cod psychological reading might see Oskar's two father figures – temperamentally and politically poles apart – as representing different aspects of Grass's own character. So when Matzerath belatedly complains about the Nazi regime, he is acting against type; his words sound like special pleading – or like the passages in Grass's memoir in which he seeks belatedly to justify his wartime behaviour.

A third newly added sequence shows a Holocaust survivor, Fajngold, arriving in rubble-strewn Danzig in the dying days of World War II. A forlorn figure in a bowler hat, he wanders round the now near-derelict grocer's shop, marvelling at the scales and the cash register. Observing social niceties, he

tries to introduce his wife and six children, but they're not there. Only when he sees the corpse of Matzerath – who has been killed by Russian troops – does he acknowledge that his family all died at Treblinka. This sequence adds an extra layer to the film, which otherwise doesn't touch on the Holocaust, and also clarifies the storytelling. In the original cut, Fajngold is featured as a spectral figure at Matzerath's funeral, but without explanation as to what he's doing there.

In the three decades since *The Tin Drum* was filmed, an increasing number of German films have followed that have dealt with the country's experience of World War II – including Schlöndorff's own *The Ogre* (*Der Unhold*, 1996) and *The Ninth Day* (*Der neunte Tag*, 2004). (Like many of the director's films since his 1979 career high point, they have not been released in the UK.) A key difference between the likes of Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Downfall* (2004) and *The Tin Drum* is that Schlöndorff is old enough to have lived through the war. "What I don't like about *Downfall*," he says, "is that it pretends to be documentary-like, but it is not the way people spoke. If you look at German films of the 50s, when you still had the generation of actors who had been living in that time, they had completely different diction and a different attitude. In *The Ninth Day* I tried to have this kind of precision, but there is a lot of what I call 'television realism': put in a few props and an old car, hang an old flag and you have recreated the past."

And it's not just the way Germans spoke that will soon be forgotten. As Schlöndorff points out, there is now a generation of younger German filmmakers and cinemagoers who are neither oppressed by personal memory of the war nor appalled (as were some in the 1960s and 70s) by their parents' response to their experiences. As Schlöndorff himself admits, "I have an 18-year-old daughter and I can see in her and her friends maybe the first generation growing up without any guilt." So in this respect, perhaps, the rerelease of his masterpiece could not be more timely.

■ Volker Schlöndorff's extended director's cut of *The Tin Drum* is out on Blu-ray in January, together with the original theatrical version



For years Michael Shannon has been building a reputation as an intense, risk-taking actor on stage and in supporting roles. But his compelling turn as the dream-haunted everyman in *'Take Shelter'* proves he can carry a movie. **Nick Pinkerton** talks to him

TROUBLE IN MIND



Curtis LaForche, the protagonist of *Take Shelter*, is a husband and father living in rural Northern Ohio, the Midwestern state whose one-time tourist slogan, stressing its self-identified 'middle-ness', dubbed it "the heart of it all".

Curtis works for a gravel company, providing a decent home for his wife and young daughter, who happens to be deaf. There is hope that insurance will pay for an operation for the little girl; Curtis and his wife are setting aside any extra money for a summer beach house. They have a future.

There is a certain genre of contemporary country and western song that celebrates the simple joys of orthodox life in small-town America – call it the checklist song, the 'got my truck and got my dog and everything is all right' song. Curtis has ticked off just about everything he's supposed to need: the pick-up and the dog and the ex-prom-queen perfect wife and the beer-drinking buddy who tells him, "You got a good life."

But when he's asleep, it all turns against him. In his dreams, the dog attacks him; his wife, holding a kitchen knife, glares at him with homicidal intent. The background of all of these night terrors is the vision of a storm building on the horizon, supernatural in its destructive power. As the self-conscious Curtis expresses it, when he's finally able to express anything: "I'm afraid something might be coming. Something that's not right."

Curtis's house sits in a wide, broad, bright expanse of flatland, but the dank, dungeon-like storm shelter in his yard, with its subterranean, enclosed space, begins to exercise an inexorable hold on him. (Here director Jeff Nichols finds a visual analogy to a troubled mind's self-condemnation, and proves himself unusually skilled with the often arbitrarily used widescreen frame.) Curtis dips into the family savings, takes out a loan he can't afford, violates his employer's rules, undermines the tenuous security of his life – all so he can expand the shelter into something more like a civil-defence structure. As Curtis is doing this, he starts to think – along with everyone else around him – that he might be going crazy, like his mother before him. This question – whether Curtis is prophet or madman – forms the uncertainty on which *Take Shelter* teeters.

Curtis is played by Michael Shannon, making his second film with director Nichols following 2007's *Shotgun Stories*. The actor – whose slowly building reputation for intense screen performances culminated with a Best Supporting Actor nomination for 2008's *Revolutionary Road* – spoke to me on the phone from a very different set in the Midwest. He's in Illinois, shooting Zack Snyder's Superman film *Man of Steel*, in which he'll play the heavy, General Zod.

On a friendly sort of first-name intimacy with the characters he plays, Shannon explains the particulars of Curtis's pathology: "If it was up to

Curtis, none of this would be happening. He doesn't relish it. There's some people that may have some eccentricities or maladies but they kind of revel in them, or they're not necessarily looking to get rid of them. And Curtis isn't interested in being eccentric in any way. I think he's ultimately ashamed of what's happening to him – even more than afraid, he's ashamed."

Shannon has made a speciality of men coming undone. His lead performance in 2006's *Bug* – the William Friedkin-directed film of the Tracy Letts stage play in which Shannon had also starred – established him before a growing audience as a screen actor capable of expressing rare shadings of disquiet. *Bug* in fact continued a project that had been underway since 1993, when Shannon – then barely 19 years old – first appeared in Letts's trailer-park-gothic play *Killer Joe*, which opened in Evanston, Illinois and eventually took Shannon through the Edinburgh Festival to the West End's Vaudeville Theatre.

"The formative experiences of my career really have been working on material written by [Tracy Letts]," says Shannon. "I guess my persona started crystallising during my work with Tracy, because before that I was really just kind of doing a hodge-podge of whatever could come my way. I started out in Chicago in very small theatres. It wasn't until I started working with Tracy that I got a little more focused."

Come 1997, Shannon's focus was extending to

WATCH THE SKIES
In 'Take Shelter',
Curtis LaForche
(Michael Shannon, all
pics) finds his anxieties
crystallised in
apocalyptic visions,
testing his marriage to
Samantha (Jessica
Chastain, below left)



starving himself to star in a production of Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* at London's Gate Theatre – directed, at the actor's behest, by the doomed Sarah Kane. Büchner's play-fragment had famously been filmed in 1979, starring Klaus Kinski and directed by Werner Herzog, who in turn would direct Shannon in 2009's *My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done*. None of this is coincidental. Like Kinski, Shannon is an actor who doesn't let you see the gears turning – who doesn't betray the process of decision-making in his fervid performances. When I point out certain mannerisms that recur in Shannon's work, he discusses his 'process'.

"You know, it's something that's really just impulse," he insists. "I've thought maybe on certain occasions that it was something I should have more control over, but a lot of it is really just a matter of me not thinking too hard about what I'm trying to do as an actor and really just trying to get to the actual experience the person's having. However my face looks or my voice sounds is a bonus if it's good – but it's not really in the forefront of my mind. I'm just really trying to have whatever experience that person's having."

Shannon's pedigree, very much in the experimental theatre, is not generally a fast track to international recognition. But in 2006, the same year he directed Ionesco's *Hunger and Thirst* in Chicago ("I knew if I didn't direct it, then nobody else would, 'cause it was such a strange little play"), the film of *Bug* made an impact in Directors' Fortnight at

Cannes. (Its director, William Friedkin, seems to have returned to his early role as a bridge-builder between stage and screen: just as he filmed Pinter's *The Birthday Party* in 1968 and Off-Broadway sensation *The Boys in the Band* in 1970, he recently completed a film of Letts's *Killer Joe* with Emile Hirsch in the role originated on stage by Shannon.)

In *Bug*, Shannon's character is harried by the idea that he has been stitched up with intrusive implants during US government tests. This delusion is strangely believable, as Shannon's face is a minefield of tics; there is a squirming thing in him, and you can almost see something burrowing just underneath his skin, trying to break out. The imbalance of Shannon's face is intrinsically suspenseful: is one eye slightly larger than the other? Whatever the case, Shannon's off-centre close-ups are fraught with anxious anticipation; even in repose, his face has the quality of an object poised on a ledge, ready to tilt and drop at any second.

Shannon is equally effective in wide shot. He is a big man – six foot four and solidly built – and part of what makes Curtis's plight so affecting in *Take Shelter* is the sight of this strong, seemingly self-reliant fellow reduced by suffering – even wetting the bed at one point. His size also gives his vulnerability an undertone of potential threat, which in *Take Shelter* manifests itself in one cloud-burst monologue after a whole film of leaden skies. ("There is a storm coming!" he bellows.)

Shannon can fling his big frame about with abandon; in fact one of the delights of *The Runaways* (2010) is watching Shannon, playing would-be Svengali and bounding glam-Frankenstein Kim Fowley, nearly scraping his head on the low ceilings of his band's rehearsal trailer. Playing producer/hustler Felix Artifice in the 2010 Off-Broadway production of Craig Wright's *Mistakes Were Made*, Shannon was a dynamo, pleading with and placating moneymen and talent through juggled multi-line calls, spewing saliva the length of the stage, tethered to his desk by his phone cord – the anchor that keeps him from launching into the stratosphere.

Bad dreams

Curtis's fear in *Take Shelter* is a flexible metaphor, one that resonates in a time when – don't you feel it? – the world seems to be built on sand. The film taps the free-floating economic incertitude particularly felt among the working class ("You take your eye off the ball one minute in this economy, you're screwed," says Curtis's older brother during a common-sense talking-to) and the fear of apocalyptic natural disasters so much in the news. *Take Shelter*'s characters are never mere metaphorical placeholders, however, thanks to Nichols's firm grounding in the particulars of his setting, both physical and social – the communal fish fries and enforced family dinners – and the undressy, lived-in supporting performances from Shannon's

LOST SOULS

Michael Shannon in, clockwise from below, 'Bug', 'My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done', 'Shotgun Stories' and 'Revolutionary Road'

Shannon has made a speciality of men coming undone, expressing rare shadings of disquiet



◀ *Boardwalk Empire* co-star Shea Whigham as Curtis's workmate and friend Dewart, and from the now-ubiquitous Jessica Chastain, doing quiet, alert work as Curtis's wife Samantha. Even the nature of Curtis's bad dreams is grounded in a very real regional specificity: I have a friend who grew up not far from the setting of *Take Shelter*, in the tornado-prone stretch once called the Great Black Swamp, who is still disturbed today by something she calls the "Terrible Tornado nightmare".

Take Shelter also plugs into more quotidian fears. As Shannon puts it: "I feel like a lot of the film is kind of a poetic expression of some actually fairly common anxieties I think most men deal with at some point in their lives, making that transition from being a young, carefree man to being a family man." Here Shannon found his own point of entry into the material. "There was a lot of synchronicity for me doing this role, in that I was having some similar experiences to Curtis's – not with the dreams or hallucinations or anything, but just starting a family. I was wondering if I was good enough to be a parent. In the film, Curtis's father had passed away recently, and my father had passed away recently. In the film it's a pretty subtle detail, and I don't talk about it a great deal, but I think it influences what Curtis is going through, and maybe inspires some of the dread and anxiety he's dealing with."

Before relocating to live with his father in Chicago, Shannon grew up in Lexington,

Kentucky, where he found a real-life model for taciturn Curtis. "I used to have a stepfather named Big Mike," he says. "He was Big Mike and I was Little Mike. My mother married him after she had been with my father. And she and Big Mike had three kids together, so we all lived together for a little while. He is definitely a prototypical example of one of these guys who can't really say very much about what's happening inside of them, what's happening in the world in general. They just kind of get up and go to work, come home and eat dinner, they like to throw the ball around in the backyard – and that's about it."

Considered mad for prophesying coming catastrophe, Curtis can't but remind a viewer of another patriarch: Noah. I point out a biblical through-line in Shannon's roles – his character in *Shotgun Stories*, known simply as "Son"; the King James phrasing of *My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done*; the 'vengeance is mine' role of Agent Nelson Van Alden in the HBO series *Boardwalk Empire*. "He really is Old Testament," says Shannon of Van Alden. "He's coming from a real fundamentalist background. I think he probably grew up in a cabin with a mud floor and no presents at Christmas."

When asked for career models, though, Shannon gives a slightly unexpected answer: "Oddly enough, I find Jimmy Stewart to be very inspirational. Talk about a career that had range! He really did so many things: to be Capra's go-to

guy and Hitchcock's go-to guy and the western's go-to guy..."

I mention another actor he reminds me of, Robert Ryan. Like Shannon, Ryan had the same stooped, effaced tallness, and evokes the same combination of menace and pity. Look at Ryan, for example, as the drifter who menaces Ida Lupino in 1952's *Beware, My Lovely* – a performance that splits a viewer's concern between fear for Lupino's safety and empathy for Ryan's lacerating anguish. With Shannon, as with Ryan, one has a sense that filmmakers and casting directors consider him a potential threat to women, thus barring him from the higher plateau of stardom that comes with romantic leads.

"You know I actually got real close to landing a job like that recently," Shannon tells me. "I had gotten all the way to the point where I was reading with the leading lady – it was the last inch to the finish line – and I think the director just realised there was something about it. As big a fan as he was of my work, there was something about it that wasn't quite jiving."

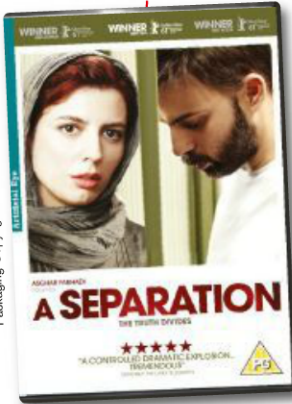
With Shannon, as with Ryan, there is an unsettling, radiating darkness that seems to come from somewhere beyond what can be taught. And that's something at least as valuable as range – the very rarest thing, in fact, in American pictures.

■ *'Take Shelter'* is released on 25 November, and is reviewed on page 77

fresh produce

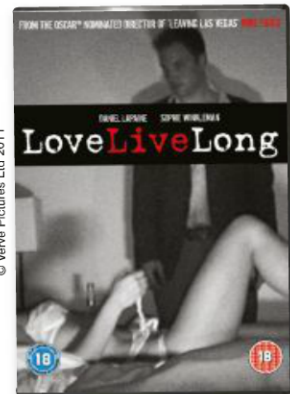


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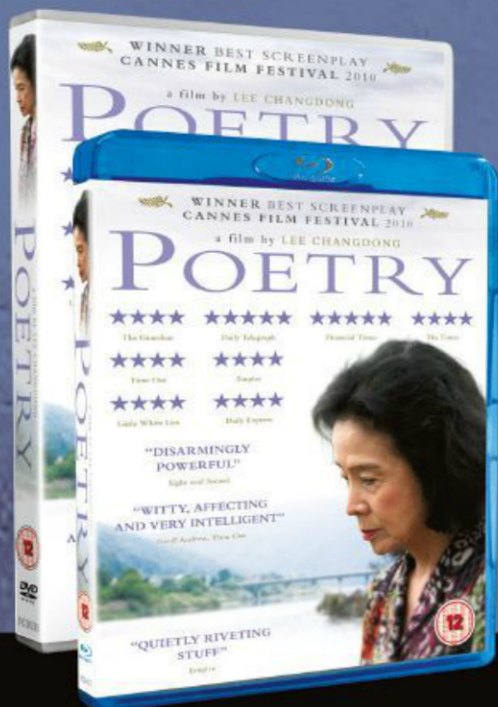
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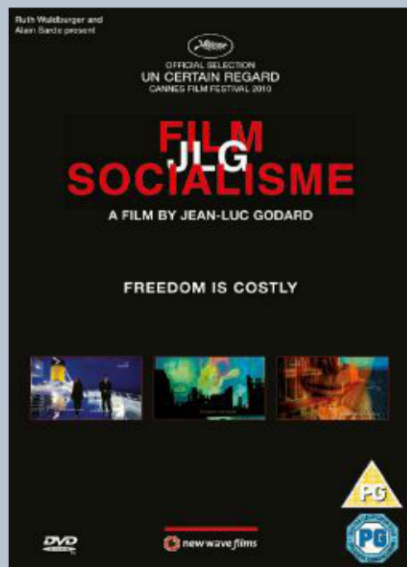


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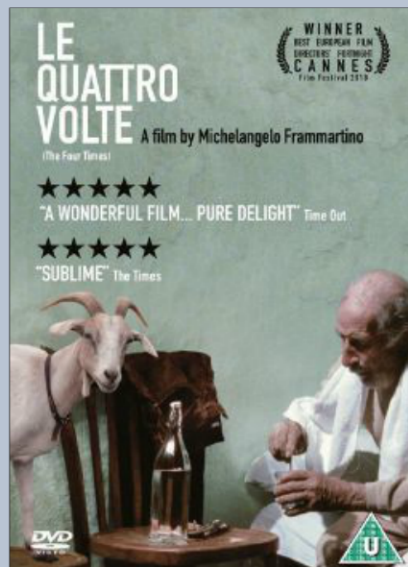
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Tabloid If Errol Morris was looking for a victim able and willing to condemn herself out of her own mouth, with little need for extra corroboration, then he could have picked no better candidate than Joyce McKinney **p76**
.....

Getting away from it all

Evoking his family's life in their Pyrenean hideaway, *'This Our Still Life'* is a mesmerising blend of lyrical intensity and freewheeling impressions from unclassifiable British filmmaker Andrew Köttling. By **Iain Sinclair**

This Our Still Life

Andrew Köttling, 2011

The magic and mystery of the hyperkinetic Andrew Köttling's drama lie in the sweet torture of the constant striving for a stillness and silence he cannot endure, but which he is obliged to overwhelm and decorate with manic voices, archive, insects, steady infusions of light and love. There is no one quite like him in cinema. And that's just as well, because the energy displacement of this lurching between documentation, performance, mangled quotation, leaves the audience on the ropes, emotionally shredded, eyeballs branded with shimmering images and merciless sounds. All the eidolons of a very solid transience are presented for our delight, but grasp at them and they're gone. Back into the paintings on the cabin wall, into an elective Walden Pond, into Mr and Mrs Köttling portrayed as a parody of Grant Wood's *American Gothic*.

Gallivant (1996) – a camper-van tour of the whole island of Britain, a three-month endurance test during which Köttling explored and celebrated his bond with a feisty grandmother and a bird-voiced daughter, Eden – captured me completely. And I have followed him, wherever he wanted to go, from that day on. He has tracked the ghost of a difficult father, and all those associated and troubling memories, across the globe, for his installation/book project *In the Wake of a Deadad*: from South London suburbia to the Faroes, to Hollywood and Mexico. With his obliging brothers, he swam the English Channel. He makes art as he breathes, hard and fast: things in boxes, revised maps, paintings, postcards, installations, rants, poems, freewheeling film 'songs' in the tradition of Stan Brakhage – and collided and collapsed feature narratives, peopled with fabulous gargoyles and tree-climbing acrobats. When he can, he collaborates with Eden. He has invigilated her from the start, touching her tongue to stimulate



Perhaps 'retreat' is not the best term for the ruined building, which appears to be an abandoned auberge on a pilgrims' route through the mountains

speech and to counter the 'tolling' effect of Joubert's syndrome, which defines, but never circumscribes, her existence.

This Our Still Life is established, securely, at a mountain retreat in the Pyrenees, a whitewashed trackside house with blue shutters and windows on the enveloping forest. Here, between 1989 and 2010, on a Samsung Digimax L85 and a Nizo super-8 camera, Köttling recorded the active diary fragments, the snapshot meditations and topographic sweeps that he has stitched together as a tribute to place. Perhaps 'retreat' is not the best term for the ruined and



recovered building, which appears to be an abandoned auberge on a pilgrims' route through the mountains, between France and Spain, somewhere that would sit comfortably in Buñuel's *The Milky Way*, or witness contraband carriers, spectres like Walter Benjamin trying to escape from a Nazi-occupied country. Köttling's exile is self-willed, a break from the furious pace of production that holds a certain temperamental melancholy at bay. But stillness is not possible. The camera roams in neurotic interrogation to animate the frame, tracking shafts of sunlight through smoke, bees on buddleia, rotting rodents, slithering snakes, toads on the hand, lizards on the wall. As a testimony built from affection, from intimacy with place and its accumulated objects, a home movie in the purest sense, this is a return to the earliest and most domesticated form of cinema. These are the brave accidents we hope to secure against our inevitable mortality.

The film opens on a time-lapse humming with decay, the rotting of a small native animal. Insect babble sets the speed dial for language too swift for easy interpretation. Awkward human intervention in this magnificent sweep of rocky

landscape is absurd and doomed to failure, even when it yields such delicious comedy. Only Köttling could collide Brakhage's lyrical intensity, that probing at the edge of focus, with the stutter and stammer of Benny Hill's caricatured Englishness. The funny voices. The portentous and culturally freighted subtitles. Upper-case announcements of the passing seasons, like a parody of Disney or David Attenborough, fix the mood for the next convulsive movement. We are offered a desert-island survey of all the found objects in Köttling's mountain ark, the sacred and the surreal. Edible colours and images so ripe you can sniff the perfume of water beads on drooping leaf.

These people present themselves as the first human family and the last. A small Swiss Family Robinson commune who play very seriously at wilderness before returning to wherever they came from, before they bumped along this mountain track in wobbly, early archive footage – when Eden was a babe and her mother smiled and ducked away from the camera, or was caught, as in primitive diary form, bathing in a tub. The whole process is wrapped in compulsive synaesthesia, painterly spills and splashes rendered as blots of sound: straw-hat Elvis karaoke or moody sonic conjurings by the ever-attentive Scanner. "The local," the critic Gareth Evans wrote, in response to this film, "in both heat and hearth needs to be radically re-imagined as the prime locus of our needs and search for belonging."

Köttling's local is an inch from his skin, a fat white snail held out to test his daughter. He peeps and probes from behind wild flower meadows and outcrops of rock. The house itself, its diurnal rituals recorded, sketched, scribbled over, becomes a screen for a projected spectacle. It is cinema as architecture. The lit windows are a play of shadows and movement, as the filmmaker/voyeur retreats into the forest. Köttling has spoken about being in this place, at Louyre, alone, and needing to step back, to stay in the darkness. The empty house is filled with ghosts. In coming outside, he confirms the



PORTRAIT OF THE ARTISTS

Andrew Kötting with his daughter Eden, right, whose still-life drawing proved the starting point for his film document of their domestic existence at their house Louyre, opposite, in the French Pyrenees

status of the recovered dwelling as a theatre of absence. *This Our Still Life*, in all its zany slapstick activity, contrives an argument between stasis, objects laid out on a table to be described and recorded, and the enormous space and presence of the rocks, the forest, the night.

This is not, finally, the still life of the family group who are playing, with proper respect and attention, at wilderness. This is their memory-mash, their summer songs, their winter walks to old Albigenian stronghold-ruins. There is the steady recording eye of the poet, work that parallels Gary Snyder's reports from Mount St Helens in his collection *Danger on Peaks* (2004). "Step by step, breath by breath – no rush, no pain." So you have the solitary, the man with the camera-notebook, and you have the supporting family group. And you have the house, a temporary shelter, a block of soft-lit windows, of other lives remembered. And you have the grey ridges, the caves, the snow peaks. There was one extraordinary moment when Kötting came back,

after one of his nocturnal expeditions into the dream of the forest, to hear the voices of his wife and daughter, who were already safely returned to England. One of his recordings had activated itself. Electronic retrievals played, spontaneously, against the accumulated layers of mountain silence.

As Brakhage had it, "First we must deal with the Light of Nature, then with the Nature of Light. And set your science aside, please, as we've no more use for it than what is of it as embodied in the camera in hand." The doubling of eye/mind exposure and capture is the germ of this project: father 'directing' daughter as she sings or paints. Father and daughter learning, one from the other, as they make an inventory of objects, relics and household devices. This is naked cinema, a thing of great value in a period of cultural stagnation and economic adventurism. This is the analogue presentation of the shadow on the cave wall teased into the digital age. And yet another file in the exuberant and ever-expanding Kötting catalogue, the multivoiced self-portrait of an artist without artifice, an art-worker learning to live in his own still life. *For credits and synopsis, see page 78*

A meditative state

Andrew Kötting on how drawing inspired 'This Our Still Life'

My daughter Eden and I have been drawing for a long time. It is an important means of expression and communication for her, and it is also something that she does very well. Ten years ago we started drawing still life together and I found that I arrived at a meditative state of mind through this process. I began to write texts that reflected a state of mind connected either directly or indirectly to the drawings.

More often than not we were living in our isolated Pyrenean farmhouse when we made these drawings. The house is called Louyre and is up a track deep in the forest, underneath the shadow of a very tall mountain. Our lives there were a million miles away from the hubbub of London living. Eden was a baby when we moved in, so the place is full of memories. I started to document our lives together on a super-8 camera in 1989, and then again with a cheap digital stills camera in 2004.

A portrait of Louyre began to appear, but it wasn't until the Christmas of 2006 when I was watching Stan Brakhage's 'Dog Star Man' that I decided to start editing the material. The snow was piled high on the roof of the house and the fire was burning hot, Eden was



ANDREW KÖTTING

lost in her drawing and I was sorting through old records and tapes. A soundtrack began to form. I wanted the disembodied voices from old recordings to attempt an explanation for this way of living, but the story of the seasons was to become my primary structure. The film begins in summer and ends in summer, and it is as simple as that. 'This Our Still Life' evokes a way of living which is elemental and rudimentary, unhurried and at odds with the modern world. From bathing outside in an old plastic bucket to shitting in a hole in the ground, from collecting wood for the fire to chasing snakes from the bedroom.

Abduction

USA 2011

Director: John Singleton

Certificate 12A 105m 48s

Making the jump from teen idol to action star isn't that easy – frankly, the last actor who really pulled it off was Dick Powell, and he waited a decade or so between his fresh-faced musical tenor leads and playing an unshaven Philip Marlowe. Crafting a vehicle to the talents of *Twilight* fixture Taylor Lautner, who has presence and can manage broody angst, ought to have yielded something less clunky than this teen spin on the Bourne franchise. In a year when *Hanna* persuasively reinvented Saoirse Ronan as a mini action girl, *Abduction* seems all the more disposable.

A great deal of criticism can (and will) be directed at Lautner's callow performance – nothing irks the sort of young men who post comments on movie sites more than a star who appeals to teenage girls – but in all fairness the worst work here comes from seasoned pro Sigourney Weaver, who gets all the silliest lines and plays the climax as if waiting for a reveal that her character has been the villain all along. The hook in the title is misleading, since the suggestion that teen hero Nathan was snatched from outside a supermarket by his 'parents' – aggressive Jason Isaacs, interestingly anguished Maria Bello (giving a real performance, cut short all too early) – is disposed of almost instantly, making this a film that features no real abduction. Lautner is notably more comfortable in the teen-pic scenes with the girl across the road, which are written on autopilot but at least benefit from Lily Collins's grounded, appealing presence.

The script seems to be stitched together from several wildly different drafts: whole plot threads dangle (Weaver's character tells Nathan that he should trust only two people, who are namechecked but never show up – and she doesn't include herself on the list), some business about a CIA traitor is raised but never confirmed or denied, and the climax struggles unsatisfactorily between the urge to make Nathan a cold-blooded killer and the need to stick with a rating



Taylor Lautner, Lily Collins

that will let Lautner's fans see him in action (in the end, he lures the baddy into the sights of an assassin but doesn't personally shoot him). Meanwhile constant talk about Nathan's absent super-agent father needs an actual onscreen meeting as a payoff, but we only get close-ups of an unbilled Dermot Mulroney talking urgently into a phone. John Singleton, who has slid to assignments like this in the years since *Boyz n the Hood* (1991), assembles a few half-decent stunts but directs most of it by rote. **Kim Newman**

CREDITS

Produced by
Doug Davison
Ellen Goldsmith-Vein
Lee Stollman
Roy Lee
Dan Lautner
Pat Crowley
Written by
Shawn Christensen
Director of Photography
Peter Menzies Jr
Editor
Bruce Cannon
Production Designer
Keith Brian Burns
Music
Edward Sheramur
Sound Mixer
Kirk Francis
Costume Designer
Ruth Carter
Stunt Co-ordinator
Brad Martin

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A film by John Singleton

Executive Producers
Jeremy Bell
Gabriel Mason
Anthony Katagas
Allison Shearmur
Wolfgang Hammer

CAST

Taylor Lautner
Nathan
Lily Collins
Karen
Alfred Molina
Burton
Jason Isaacs
Kevin
Maria Bello
Mara
Sigourney Weaver
Dr Bennett
Denzel Whitaker
Gilly
Michael Nyqvist
Kozlow

Dolby Digital/
DataSat/SDDS
Colour by
DeLuxe
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Lionsgate UK

9,522 ft +0 frames



From Brussels with love: 'The Adventures of Tintin'

The Adventures of Tintin The Secret of the Unicorn

Director: Steven Spielberg

Certificate PG 106m 47s

After completing *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* in 1989, Steven Spielberg declared, "I feel as if I've graduated from the college of Cliffhanger U." *Tintin*, which the director first read during his Indiana Jones years, returns him to this alma mater. Initially written in serial form, the books by Belgian artist Hergé are relentlessly episodic – Tintin and friends repeatedly capture rogues and evade capture, biff and get biffed. It's not so much a story arc as a pogo, and the rush of imperilled incident is both exciting and exhausting.

In the film, boy reporter Tintin (Jamie Bell) meets alcoholic Captain Haddock and is involved in a search for lost treasure, endangered by the suave villain Ivan Sakharine (Daniel Craig). The elaborate plot for this 3D motion-

capture animation draws on the 1943 Tintin story *The Secret of the Unicorn*, with additions from *Red Rackham's Treasure* (1944) and *The Crab with the Golden Claws* (1941, in which Tintin first encounters his seadog ally). Spielberg's British screenwriters have all previously titivated genre tales. Steven Moffat (*Doctor Who*), Edgar Wright (*Shaun of the Dead*) and Joe Cornish (*Attack the Block*) produce lightly sardonic dialogue and dovetailed exposition during Haddock's thirst-crazed hallucinations in the Sahara. A ship's rigging rises from the desert sands as he recalls the feud between his ancestor Sir Francis and the ruthless pirate Red Rackham.

After a largely unloved sequel to his Indiana Jones series (*The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, 2008), Tintin's adventures offer Spielberg the boundless fantasy of animation. Hergé's books, like the Indiana Jones movies, have been dogged by a fug of racism; Spielberg, working with producer Peter Jackson, treads lightly here, and Tintin's pith helmet in Morocco is the most explicit nod to colonialism.

The design team whirl Hergé's elegant, shadowless lines into a sumptuously modelled 3D universe. They celebrate the textures of iron, rust and dust-smear air, yellowed parchment and throwback engineering.

SYNOPSIS An unnamed European city in the mid-20th century. Young reporter Tintin buys a model ship called the Unicorn, despite competition from an insistent American and a sinister gentleman named Sakharine. Tintin learns that the Unicorn was a 17th-century warship captained by Sir Francis Haddock, and that Sakharine owns both Marlinspike Hall, the Haddocks' ancestral home, and another model of the Unicorn. Tintin's ship is stolen; the American is shot when warning him of danger. Tintin finds a cryptic parchment about Sir Francis's treasure that had been concealed in his ship's mast.

There are three model ships, each containing a clue, and Sakharine covets them. Tintin is abducted by the crew of the Karaboudjan, commanded by Sakharine, who has displaced the alcoholic Captain Haddock (a descendant of Sir Francis). Tintin's dog Snowy releases him, and they escape with Haddock. Tintin captures a plane that attacked them, before crashing in the Sahara. Haddock describes how Sir Francis captured a treasure hoard from the pirate Red Rackham, and realises that Sakharine is Rackham's descendant, seeking riches and revenge.

In Morocco, Sakharine steals the third clue and returns home. After a showdown at the docks, he is arrested by detectives Thompson and Thompson. The clues lead Tintin and Haddock to the treasure at Marlinspike Hall, but they realise that yet more booty lies drowned and resolve to recover it.

SYNOPSIS A Pittsburgh suburb, the present. Looking at a website about missing children, teenager Nathan finds a photograph he recognises as his younger self. He contacts the site, which leads to hitmen turning up at his home and murdering Kevin and Mara, the couple he believed were his parents. Escaping with Karen, a girl who lives across the road, he contacts the authorities and reaches Burton, a CIA agent who claims to have answers. Dr Bennett, his psychiatrist, advises him not to trust Burton and to go on the run.

It transpires that Nathan is the son of Martin Price, a freelance secret agent who has a list of US traitors which shady international fixer Kozlow wants to get his hands on. At Price's apartment, Nathan unwittingly picks up a cell phone which has the scrambled data loaded on it. Eluding Kozlow's hired guns and the CIA, Nathan shows survival and espionage skills instilled by Kevin and perhaps passed on from his father. When Kozlow threatens to murder Karen, her family and all his friends, Nathan sets up a sting to meet him at a baseball stadium and kill him. Kozlow puts Nathan off by talking about his father and takes his gun, but Nathan – after speaking with Price on the phone – leads Kozlow on a chase outside the stadium, where Price shoots him dead. Burton, who is on the list of traitors, is apprehended. Nathan is adopted, at least for the moment, by Dr Bennett.

Digital craft burnishes these escapades from a pre-digital age. Bravura action sequences exploit the swooping animator's eye – soaring from falcon's-eye view to danger at tarmac level, or thrilling to the flame-licked, tangled rigging of opposed sailing ships. Other scenes have a comic gleam, as a soprano's ear-bleed coloratura proves a cunning weapon against bulletproof glass.

Motion-capture filming allows naturalistic performances, with faces teased into caricature around nose and chin. Even so, the dauntless protagonist is a problem. While Pixar animations can persuade audiences to invest emotion in a clownfish, toy cowboy or tidy-minded robot, Tintin's righteous pluck keeps anxiety at bay. A hero who can bring down a plane with a single bullet doesn't need us to will him on. His best moment comes in a Spielberg self-reference, as his quiff cuts through the water like the *Jaws* shark's fin. More compellingly imagined are Snowy, Tintin's resourceful white terrier, and the extravagantly flawed Captain Haddock (a loyal but irascible lush with grimy fingernails), richly played by Andy Serkis.

A luxury-tooled fantasy product, the film ends with a now-customary plug for a sequel – Hergé's original *Unicorn* serial did the same. But, like the thrill-sapping hero and anti-climactic denouement, it botches the full satisfaction of adrenaline adventure. **David Jays**

CREDITS

Produced by
Steven Spielberg
Peter Jackson
Kathleen Kennedy
Screenplay
Steven Moffat
Edgar Wright
Joe Cornish
Based on *The Adventures of Tintin* [The Crab with the Golden Claws, The Secret of the Unicorn and Red Rackham's Treasure] by Hergé
Edited by
Michael Kahn
Art Directors
Andrew Jones
Jeff Wiesniewski
Music
John Williams
Animation Supervisor
Jamie Beard
Visual Effects and Animation
Weta Digital Ltd

©[TBC]
Production Companies
Paramount Pictures and Columbia Pictures present an Amblin Entertainment, Wingnut Films, Kennedy/Marshall production of a Steven Spielberg film
Executive Producers
Ken Kamins
Nick Rodwell
Stephane Sperry

CAST

motion capture cast
Jamie Bell
Tintin
Andy Serkis
Captain Archibald Haddock

Daniel Craig
Ivan Ivanovich Sakharine
Nick Frost
Thomson
Simon Pegg
Thompson
Toby Jones
Silk
Mackenzie Crook
Tom
Daniel Mays
Allan
Gad Elmaleh
Ben Salaad
Joe Starr
Barnaby

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Paramount Pictures UK

9,610 ft + 8 frames

An African Election

USA/Switzerland/Ghana 2010
Director: Jarreth Merz

Swiss-Ghanaian director Jarreth Merz brings a diligent eye to this documentary study of Ghana's 2008 struggle towards a democratic presidential election, and the impact is deepened by the very vivid cinematography of Topher Osborn. The film gets close to key players as they commence their campaigns for office, and then as too-close-to-call results necessitate additional ballots and stimulate accusations of fraud and corruption on both sides. However, despite access to meetings and rallies, and interviews with participants, commentators and voters, there's a distant feel to the film, and an absence of editorial comment – barring intermittent chapter headings offering dates and brief context – renders the point of the project a little obscure. Ultimately not much of note actually happens. We're told that the parties aren't poles apart politically, though not much more about their policies and intentions; their representatives are camera-adept sloganeers whose personalities don't really come through.

Crowded polling stations see minor unrest, which intensifies slightly when a first and a second ballot both prove inconclusive; but everyone wants to vote, everyone's committed to proving that Ghana can responsibly run its own political process, and in the end things come together without too much drama. This might well be the point – that an African election need not be a mess of corruption but rather can be as workmanlike, managed and prone to slight controversy as a western one – but it doesn't make for very illuminating viewing.

The only player granted substantial context via archive footage is the domineering former military director Jerry Rawlings, but the nature of his involvement – agitating for a transparent process and continually meeting with electoral observers, but nakedly biased towards his own party, the National Democratic Congress – remains ambiguous. When he alleges that the incumbent New Patriotic Party is "bent on taking [the election] by fraud or violence", Merz doesn't give us enough information to judge whether



Poll position: 'An African Election'

this is mere rhetoric or a genuine concern. Similar accusations fly from the other side, but whether there really is violence and corruption going on is impossible to discern from what appears on screen. Copious footage of Ghanaians queuing to vote, attending rallies and celebrating on the streets is atmospheric, but the screen time might have been better used balancing the background we get on Rawlings with more precise information about Ghana's turbulent political history, and the specific aims of the two parties we see represented. Without this context, the meaning of the eventual NDC victory is tough to determine.

In a 24-hour live news culture, 2008 is a long time ago; *An African Election*, while an interesting document, could have done with more solidity and angled comment to preserve its relevance into 2011. **Hannah McGill**

CREDITS

Co-directed by
Kevin Merz
Produced by
Jarreth Merz
Co-writers
Enika Tasini
Shari Yantra Marcacci
Director of Photography
Topher Osborn
Editor
Samir Samperisi
Music Composer
Patrick Kirst
Music
Ghanaba
Formerly known as Guy Warren
Production Sound Mixer
Quirin Sieber

©Urban Republic Film
Production Companies
Urban Republic

presents in association with The Cell Film Production, RSI Radiotelevisione Svizzera, SSR-SRG Idée Suisse, Amika Films a film by Jarreth Merz
Executive Producers
Franco Agostoni
Brigitte Agostoni

In Colour
[1.78:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Dogwoof Pictures

The Awakening

France/United Kingdom 2011
Director: Nick Murphy
Certificate 15 106m 32s

A ghostly child, a supposedly haunted boarding school with a shadowy history as a private house, a determined female ghost-hunter with no time for superstition or fakery... put that lot together, in an England haunted by the losses of the Great War and the subsequent influenza epidemic, and the omens are certainly good for this would-be superior scare story, which hints at the sophisticated period chills of Alejandro Amenábar's *The Others* (2001) and sets itself up against such esteemed forebears as Jack Clayton's Henry James adaptation *The Innocents* (1961). However, initial promise gives way to mounting disappointment when it becomes clear that co-writer and first-time feature director Nick Murphy has bitten off rather more than he can chew. Such stories demand a controlled subtlety of conception and execution, yet here an initially intriguing mystery falls to pieces because the film-makers offer up a mélange of assorted plot points in lieu of an effective, tonally consistent resolution.

Essentially, the story sets itself up as a test of scepticism. Bringing her stern head-girl persona to the proceedings, Rebecca Hall is well cast and effective as Florence Cathcart, an author who's won fame by debunking much of the spiritualism that flourished while 1920s England mourned so many departed souls. Florence has herself lost a lover in the war, so we're left to wonder if her resistance to the notion of the spirit world is a coping mechanism to keep grief at bay – an intriguing notion that's left sadly under-developed. Instead there's the haunting at Rookford School to be solved, as troubled war-veteran teacher Robert Mallory (Dominic West) presents a series of class photographs years apart, each with the same spookily smudged figure in shot, suggesting the presence of an apparition believed to be responsible for scaring one of the pupils to death. Soon Florence is laying out her photographic equipment in the hallways of the creaky old place, hoping to reveal a rather more prosaic explanation for the goings-on, yet flashes of a boy with a Munch *Scream* CGI face scampering down the corridors prompt the conclusion that there's more happening here than can be reduced to empirical formulae.

With Eduard Grau's accomplished cinematography removing all hint of warmth from the images, Murphy's film gets good mileage from its frisson-friendly dark pond in the grounds, a creepy doll's-house model of the school which seems to have a life of its own, and the skittering footsteps just out of reach. Teasing echoes of *The Shining* (1980) abound, and continue to do so when the script eventually has to come clean about its central mystery. At this point the spell is broken by a



Return of the screw: Rebecca Hall

convoluted, credibility-free explanation founded on a serious case of amnesia for Hall's protagonist, while there's an extraneous Shyamalan-esque supernatural twist for good measure.

A disappointment, all in all, and one's exasperation is certainly not tempered by Daniel Pemberton's overloaded orchestra-plus-choral score. Moreover, when we do get to the end – by which time Hall has been given good cause to reconsider her scepticism – we're left

with a sense that little has really been at stake. Compare this with the Jamesian equivalent in *The Innocents*, where the notion that children may have been corrupted by malign otherworldly forces places us in a freefall of moral uncertainty. Here, whoever or whatever has been awakened in the meantime, there's little sense of imaginative afterlife to our knowledge of Rookford's dark past.

♦♦ Trevor Johnston

CREDITS

Produced by
David M. Thompson
Sarah Curtis
Julia Stannard
Screenplay
Stephen Volk
Nick Murphy
Director of Photography
Eduard Grau
Film Editor
Victoria Boydell
Production Designer
Jon Henson
Music
Daniel Pemberton
Production Sound Mixer
Colin Nicolson
Costume Designer
Caroline Harris

@StudioCanal/BBC Production Companies
Studio Canal Features and BBC Films present in association with Creative Scotland and LipSync Productions an Origin Pictures production
Supported by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland
Developed by the BBC
Executive Producers
Jenny Borgars
Will Clarke
Olivier Courson
Norman Merry
Joe Oppenheimer
Carole Sheridan

CAST

Rebecca Hall
Florence Cathcart
Dominic West
Robert Mallory
Imelda Staunton
Maud Hill
Isaac Hempstead-Wright
Tom
Joseph Mawle
Edward Judd
John Shrapnel
Reverend Hugh Purslow
Cal MacAninch
Freddie Strickland
Lucy Cohu
Constance Strickland
Shaun Dooley
Malcolm McNair
Diana Kent
Harriet Cathcart

Richard Durden
Alexander Cathcart

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
StudioCanal Limited
9,588 ft +0 frames

Battle of Warsaw 1920

Poland 2011

Director: Jerzy Hoffman

Certificate 15 115m 21s

Jerzy Hoffman is the doyen of the Polish *superprodukcja*, exemplified by his Henryk Sienkiewicz adaptations *Colonel Wolodyjowski* (1968), *The Deluge* (1974) and *With Fire and Sword* (1999). His latest film is also conceived on a vast scale, with thousands of human and equine extras supporting a starry cast.

But while the earlier films were set in the 17th century, this one tackles a topic that was politically untouchable before the Soviet Union's 1991 collapse, since it dramatises a substantial military victory by the then fledgling Polish state over the Soviet Union at the culmination of the 1919-20 Polish-Bolshevik War. But unlike Andrzej Wajda's similarly taboo-challenging *Katyn* (2007), which sought to depict the psychological state of those affected by the Soviet-backed massacre, Hoffman overwhelmingly favours lavish spectacle.

On that score, he certainly delivers, not least by shooting Poland's first homegrown 3D film. Aside from an ill-advisedly handheld combat sequence, the process works well, and cinematographer Slawomir Idziak's visual treatment imaginatively recreates the look of early colour photographic processes. Although missing few opportunities to show bayonets, rifles and cannons thrusting out of the screen, the 3D process enhances more evocative images such as the newlywed cabaret singer Ola's legs surrounded by those of the horses as her husband Jan's cavalry unit mobilises for war. The first half intercuts Jan's military adventures and Ola's stage routines, her songs catching the mood of the times: romantic melodies, singalong anti-Bolshevik anthems, heartrending laments for the fallen.

So far, so undeniably impressive, but the script lets it down badly. One hardly expects subtlety in a film clearly conceived as a rousing patriotic flag-waver, but the Poles are invariably upstanding heroes and the Soviets twisted villains, literally crapping on the floor of a seized stately home. Historical and

political details are crudely shoehorned into conversations, usually at the expense of characterisation – Jan's encounter with a band of Cossacks has no other function than to establish that not all Russians were pro-Soviet. Józef Pilsudski, one of Polish history's most fascinatingly mercurial figures has little to do except berate underlings while reeling off Napoleonic aphorisms like, "If you fear Waterloo, you'll never have Austerlitz!"

While insightful comparisons can be drawn between ostensibly opposite but identically blinkered Soviet and Polish attitudes towards social class, the treatment here is as bludgeoning as a rifle butt to the temple, though it includes a moment of pure Jerome K. Jerome as Cheka commissar Bykowski realises that his men are gang-raping the impeccably proletarian milkmaid instead of the haughtily aristocratic landlady, and switches from nonchalance to outrage in a millisecond. Moments like this contribute to the film's considerable kitsch entertainment value, though it's easy to see why many Polish critics have been less keen. ♦♦ Michael Brooke

CREDITS

Producers
Jerzy R. Michaluk
Mariusz Gazda
Screenplay
Jaroslaw Sokol
Jerzy Hoffman
Director of Photography
Slawomir Idziak
Editors
Marcin 'Kot' Bastkowski
Production Designer
Andrzej Halinski
Music
Krzysztof Debski
Sound
Waclaw Pilkowski
Costume Designers
Civilian:
Magdalena Teslawska
Military:
Andrzej Szenajch

@[TBC] Production Companies
Zodiak Jerzy Hoffman Film Production presents in association with Bank Zachodni WBK a film by Jerzy Hoffman
With the support of Polski Instytut Sztuki Filmowej/Polish Film Institute, HBO Polska

CAST

Daniel Olbrychski
Józef Pilsudski

Natasza Urbanska
Ola Raniewska
Borys Szyz
Jan Krynicki
Jerzy Bonczak
Captain Kosztzewa
Adam Ferency
Chekist Bykowski
Boguslaw Linda
Colonel Boleslaw
Wieniawa-Dlugoszowski
Ewa Wisniewska
Ada
Aleksandr Domogarov
Kryszkin, Cossack
sotnik
Olga Kabo
Sofia Nikolajewna
Andrzej Strzelecki
Wincenty Witos
Michal Zebrowski
Prime Minister
Wladyslaw Grabski
Rafal Cieszyński
Lieutenant Kowalewski

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.78:1]
Subtitles
3D

Distributor
Cooltura Films Ltd

10,381 ft +8 frames

Polish theatrical title
1920 Bitwa
Warszawska

SYNOPSIS Poland, 1920. Chief of State Józef Pilsudski hears that the Soviet Red Army plans to invade. Cavalry officer Jan Krynicki is called up, and after carousing with his friends Samuel and Anatol he quickly marries cabaret singer Ola Raniewska. Pilsudski dismisses the advice of Prime Minister Wladyslaw Grabski that Polish forces are too weak to resist invasion, and scores a military victory in Kiev. Jan is falsely accused of being a Bolshevik spy and sentenced to death. The Red Army intervenes just in time, and Jan's sentence 'proves' to Cheka commissar Bykowski that he is on their side. Jan takes advantage of an aerial bombardment to shoot him. He is captured by a Cossack detachment. Pilsudski demands that everyone back the war effort. Ola trains as a machine gunner, while Samuel and Anatol become radiotelegraphers. When nearby Radzymin is captured, trenches are dug outside Warsaw. Samuel and Anatol crack the Soviet code and pass Marshal Tukhachevsky's orders to Pilsudski, who devises a daring counter-offensive by the Wieprz River, a plan that involves disengaging the best Polish units from Warsaw's defence. Ola and her colleagues take over, facing near-certain defeat until the Polish cavalry arrives and expels the Red Army. Ola and Jan are reunited in hospital.

The British Guide to Showing Off

United Kingdom 2011
Director: Jes Benstock
Certificate 15 97m 27s

Somewhere between high priest and naughty auntie, Andrew Logan holds a unique place in alternative British culture: he is a child of some privilege who refused categorisation without rejecting his background (or being rejected by it) and an artist whose work – at once exuberantly fantastical and structurally robust – has arguably proved too cute for the art world and too queer for the mainstream. His most prominent achievement is the Alternative Miss World, a pageant of glorious freakery created in 1972, with Crufts and its premium on ‘poise, personality and originality’ as inspiration. The first event was a knockout, with Hockney in the audience, Bowie stuck outside and Jarman on the catwalk as Miss Issippi. (He didn’t win but the event would provide him with a writer for *Sebastiane* and locations for *Jubilee*.)

The British Guide to Showing Off is a suitably effervescent tribute to the event and its maker, tracing Logan’s personal history alongside preparations for the 12th Alternative Miss World in 2009. Director Jes Benstock and producer Dorigen Hammond, whose backgrounds are in performing, animation, design and music videos as well as documentary production, follow the likes of *Jack Smith and the Destruction of Atlantis* (2006) in offering an unapologetically stylised take on a stylish subject, with plenty of kinetic animation as well as copious personal archive material and high-value witnesses, from Brian Eno to Zandra Rhodes, Divine to Grayson Perry. The events themselves, to the filmmakers’ advantage, have been extensively documented.

Logan’s ability to bring together the cream of various underground and alternative scenes as well as august institutions – the Royal Academy’s Sir Norman Rosenthal once competed in the pageant in outfits designed by YBAs – emerges as one of his outstanding talents. The Alternative Miss World offers a platform for the celebration of difference and creativity, a space in which expression trumps race, age, gender or nationality and sparks can be struck that might find fruition in a year or two’s time. Richard O’Brien, preparing the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* for the screen, found the iconic Fran Fullenwider at the event and might have taken notes on an outfit or two; looks modelled in the 1980s by Blitz Kids found their way on to high streets. The 1980s also found the event at its most politically charged: it suffered because of panic over AIDS, and channelled anger over populist homophobia and xenophobia into some of the most extraordinary outfits seen on a British stage. The film brings



‘The British Guide to Showing Off’

us up to date with preparations for the most recent pageant, demonstrating that the tensions between hand-to-mouth practicality and galactic-scale conceptualisation remain as potent as ever while bringing current scenesters such as Amy Lamé, Fancy Chance and Daniel Lismore into the picture.

The British Guide to Showing Off is a valuable document of a unique event and an affectionate tribute to its creator. Its picture of Logan’s life is surprisingly unruffled: concerns over budgets and venues notwithstanding, he seems to have enjoyed close and supportive relationships with his family and his partner of four decades and even to have won over the locals of Berriew, the tiny Welsh village where he converted a squash court into a museum and recruited a phalanx of volunteers to collaborate in his performances; the stiffest resistance here, it seems, is a sceptically rolled eye. Maybe all you need is love.

Ben Walters

CREDITS

Produced by
Dorigen Hammond
Cinematography
Denzil Armour-Brown
Andrew David Clark
Johnny Cocking
Editor
Stephen Boucher
Original Score
Mike ‘Flowers’ Roberts
Sound
Richard Meredith

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Ltd/Film London
Production Companies
Film London presents a
Living Cinema
production
A Microwave film in
association with BBC

Wales and the Film
Agency for Wales
A film by Jes Benstock
Produced with the
support of Film London
and BBC Films with
funding from the
National Lottery, the
Film Agency for Wales
Supported by the
National Lottery
through the Arts Council
of Wales

In Colour
[1.78:1]

Distributor
Verve Pictures Ltd

8,770 ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS A documentary about the British artist Andrew Logan and the Alternative Miss World, the outré pageant he devised in 1972. The film charts Logan’s personal history in parallel with preparations for the 2009 pageant.



Flier in the ointment: Tom Hiddleston, Rachel Weisz

The Deep Blue Sea

United Kingdom 2011
Director: Terence Davies
Certificate 12A 98m 21s

In his centenary year, dramatist Terence Rattigan, long considered the outmoded epitome of bourgeois English theatre, has again become fashionable, with a spate of West End revivals. His new modishness certainly won’t be part of his appeal to Terence Davies, whose cultural tastes make his as determinedly old-fashioned (or at least anti-fashion) a sensibility as Woody Allen’s. Davies’s *The Deep Blue Sea* can certainly be considered ‘old-fashioned’, both in its fascination with traditional English mores and in the seriousness, unmodulated by mitigating irony, with which it treats intense emotion. In the film, Hester Collyer – a judge’s wife who has an unhappy affair with an RAF pilot – dismisses her plight as not really tragic: “Sad perhaps, but hardly Sophocles.” Yet Davies gives Hester’s story an unembarrassed emotional resonance in the lineage of the great ‘women’s pictures’ of the 1940s and 1950s.

Davies has adapted the play – previously filmed in 1955 by Anatole Litvak – partly by stripping down Rattigan’s cluttered text. He clears out the verbose interventions of gauche neighbours the Welches, and pares down the role of the sympathetic Miller, a doctor struck off (it’s implied) for homosexuality, and therefore well able to understand Hester’s wilfully adopted outcast status. At the same time, Davies has not exactly opened out the play – set over one day in Hester’s flat – but amplified it with his own additions. The tolerant landlady Mrs Elton, formidably played here by Ann Mitchell, now has a key scene in which she offers Hester a home truth, in terms Rattigan might have shuddered at. Seen tending her invalid husband, she says to Hester, “You know what real love is? It’s wiping someone’s arse... and letting them keep their dignity, so you can both go on.”

Davies also creates an episode in which the stresses of Hester’s marriage become clear during a visit to her mother-in-law – a brittle tour de force by Barbara Jefford. This sequence leads Davies to somewhat overstate Hester’s defiance – it’s hard to credit her talking back to this fearsome matriarch quite so

crisply – but there’s some relishable wit in the older Mrs Collyer’s espousal of “guarded enthusiasm” over passion, and her cooing over the cake (in a line worthy of Joe Orton): “The Battenberg – it’s a pleasure I’ve never outgrown.”

There are other additions: the exuberantly boyish RAF banter of Hester’s lover Freddie (“I served in the Battle of Britain, old fruit, old darling”) is arguably laid on a bit thick, though it helps establish her amused delight in him. And there are several musical moments that echo Davies’s earliest features: a single-shot track along the platform of Aldwych tube during the Blitz, to a sung ‘Molly Malone’; one pub singalong, done straight, and another to ‘You Belong to Me’ which fades into the Jo Stafford recording as Hester and Freddie dance, perfectly capturing the fantasy-tinged intimacy of their romance.

In his patented singalong moments, Terence D, it might be objected, overwhelms Terence R. But then the film, unlike the play, is not remotely naturalistic. Rather than a conventional adaptation, this is more like a cinematic opera after Rattigan. The film’s masterstroke is a seamless eight-minute ‘prelude’, set to Samuel Barber, in which the surging orchestrations accompany a scene- and mood-setting crane shot from a bombed-out building to the window where Hester stands, prior to her suicide attempt (the shot is repeated in reverse, by daylight, as the film ends on an equivocally positive note). Barber’s concerto continues through a sparsely worded series of flashbacks – notably a bedroom sequence showing just how unambiguously carnal Hester and Freddie’s relationship is.

The three leads are superb: the anachronistic looks of Tom Hiddleston’s Freddie fit the period perfectly; Simon Russell Beale has a sympathetic, wounded gravitas as Hester’s husband William; and Rachel Weisz’s lustrous evocation of sensual sorrow gives Hester a distinct cerebral edge. But it’s hard to entirely accept that these three characters fit together as the play’s triangle. You wonder whether a woman as sensually self-composed as Weisz’s Hester would go for someone as obviously callow, yet burnt-out, as this Freddie. Conversely, would a woman so obviously youthful have married a stolid greybeard like Russell Beale’s grizzled William? (Created by Peggy Ashcroft, Hester has generally been identified with older, certainly less girlish actresses than Weisz, such as Penelope Wilton or recently Greta

← Scacchi.) In fact, Davies has skewed the triangle in a somewhat Freudian direction, emphasising that Hester is caught untenably between a father-figure and a surrogate son. And, while arguments have raged over interpretations of Rattigan's play as an encoded homosexual drama, the casting of Hiddleston as a faded ephebe certainly makes the film readable as both a traditional tragedy of female passion and an implicitly queer story about the pains of being mad about the boy.

Davies vividly catches the mood of Rattigan's tattered post-war England, of painfully observed proprieties on one hand, untameable desire on the other. Visually the film evokes both emotional grandeur and material shabbiness, in the claustrophobia of Hester's tobacco-brown flat, a space where, when curtains are flung open, daylight enters but doesn't illuminate. Rattigan's Ladbroke Grove (not named in the film) is a desert for social exiles, victims of "anger, hatred, shame" – the conditions that afflict Hester's soul, but which, Davies's film reminds us, are perennial components of the English condition. ♦♦ **Jonathan Romney**

CREDITS

Produced by
Sean O'Connor
Kate Ogborn
Adapted by
Terence Davies
Based on the play by
Terence Rattigan
Director of
Photography
Florian Hoffmeister
Editor
David Charap
Production Designer
James Merfield
Sound Designer
Tim Barker
Costume Designer
Ruth Myers

©Deep Blue Sea
Productions Limited
and UK Film Council
Production
Companies
UK Film Council and
Film4 present in
association with
Protagonist Pictures, Lip
Sync Productions and
Artificial Eye a
Camberwell/Fly Film
production
Made with the support
of the UK Film Council's
Development and Film
Funds

Executive Producers
Katherine Butler
Lisa Marie Russo
Peter Hampden
Norman Merry

CAST

Rachel Weisz
Hester Collyer
Tom Hiddleston
Freddie Page
Sir William Russell Beale
Sir William Collyer
Ann Mitchell
Mrs Elton
Jolyon Coy
Philip Welch
Karl Johnson
Mr Miller
Harry Hadden-Paton
Jackie Jackson
Sarah Kants
Liz Jackson
Oliver Ford Davies
Hester's father
Barbara Jefford
Collyer's mother

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Artificial Eye Film Co. Ltd
8,851 ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS

London, circa 1950. In her flat, Hester Collyer is revived after attempting suicide. She has left her husband, judge Sir William, for Freddie, a former RAF pilot, but he has proved a neglectful partner. Hester remembers the passionate beginnings of their relationship, and a stifling visit to her mother-in-law's. Freddie returns to the flat, reads Hester's suicide note and storms out. After a visit from William, Hester follows Freddie to the pub; they argue. Later, Freddie tells Hester he has accepted a job in Rio, and is leaving without her. Hester begs him to stay one last night; next morning, Freddie leaves.

Demons Never Die

United Kingdom 2011

Director: Arjun Rose

Written, directed and co-produced by new kid on the block Arjun Rose, *Demons Never Die* is a peculiar beast of a film whose name is legion. On the one hand, it's another British urban yooft flick, featuring a fresh-faced cast of actors (and some musicians) whose collective filmography – including *Kidulthood*, *Adulthood*, *Anuvahood*, *This Is England*, *Bullet Boy*, *Cherry Tree Lane* and television's *Misfits* – helps position the film in its gritty if stylised cinematic milieu. On the other hand, the London teenagers whose emotional ups and downs the plot traces seem less intent on outmanoeuvring others in the hood than on harming themselves, as their various problems unite them in a shared desire to shuffle off this mortal coil – at least until they start enjoying one another's company and having second thoughts. It's as though John Hughes's *The Breakfast Club* (1985) had collided with Sion Sion's *Suicide Club* (2001) by way of television's *Skins*.

Yet as fame-hungry would-be mass-murderer Kenny (Jason Maza) puts it, "When you make a deal with the fucking devil, you don't change your mind at the gates of hell." And so it is that, just as these emo kids start abandoning their plans for group suicide and consider wanting to live again, the film's genre mash-up really begins, with its characters being murdered one after the other by a masked assailant (or is it assailants?) straight out of a *giallo*. Where, viewed in isolation, the film's ensemble teen drama and slasher material would have been entirely hackneyed, together they make for an interesting and occasionally uncanny mix. Through a series of hints, clues and red herrings, the film encourages us to unmask its villain(s), but leaves us uncertain, even beyond the final revelation, how much we should distinguish between the diabolical killer and the psychological demons pursuing these damaged characters. Here, as in Philip Ridley's

recent *Heartless*, the devil seems to be, at least in part, a metaphor for internal conflicts and broader societal ills – though as metaphors go, this demon manages to accumulate a rather high body count.

The range of issues raised in the film (teen abortion, childhood trauma, bullying, mental illness, eating disorders, family abandonment, school pressures, homosexuality etc) means that breadth comes at the expense of any real depth, but at least a series of stylistic ticks keeps everything visually (and sonically) arresting. Rose is confident enough to leave some loose ends hanging, so that their implications can only be unpicked later by the viewer. It's the sort of enduring ambiguity that almost makes up for what might otherwise seem a messily overdetermined look at the horrors of adolescence. ♦♦ **Anton Bitel**

CREDITS

Producers
Jo Podmore
Rhian Williams
Arjun Rose
Jason Maza
Written by
Arjun Rose
Director of
Photography
Toby Moore
Editor
Tim Murrell
Production Designer
Paul Burns
Score Music Written,
Produced and
Arranged by/Piano/
Keyboards
The Angel
Production Sound
Mixers
Nigel Albermarliche
Matt Weeks
Costume Designer
Robert Lever

©S. Kids Films Ltd and
Exile Media Ltd
Production
Companies
Idris Elba and Exile
Media Group present an
Arjun Rose film
An Exile Media Group
production
Executive Producers
Idris Elba
Peter Delfgou
Tara Palmer-Tomkinson
Stephen Behrens

CAST

Tulisa Contostavlos
Amber Johnson
Robert Sheehan
Archie
Ashley Walters
Bates
Reggie Yates
Mason
Jason Maza
Kenny
Emma Rigby
Samantha
Jennie Jacques
Jasmine
Shanika Warren-
Markland
Ashleigh
Andrew Ellis
Davey
Femi Oyeniran
Cain
Jack Doolan
James
Patrick Baladi
Gary Hudson
Arnold Oceng
Curtis
Jacob Anderson
Ricky

In Colour

Distributor
Exile Media

Dream House

USA 2011

Director: Jim Sheridan

Certificate 15 91m 46s

It's perhaps unnecessary to point out the irony that *Dream House* is a film about the bottom falling out from under a man's best-laid plans – for it is a film that you can see really trying to do something and collapsing in the process, and to see it fail so resoundingly is more disheartening than the predestined failure of purely cynical product.

Dream House is directed by Jim Sheridan, who in 2002's superlative *In America* dealt quite frankly and touchingly with the death of a child and the process of grief and recovery in a family, all of which the new film is likewise concerned with. *Dream House* was shot by Caleb Deschanel, a DP of prodigious talent, who gives the wintry American north-east a sad fairytale quality, and it stars a number of fine actors, including Daniel Craig as Will, Rachel Weisz as his wife Libby and, as their neighbour Ann, Naomi Watts, a performer whose commitment to even the most threadbare of material and underwritten of parts never falters. Watts's role is bafflingly fragmentary, suggesting mutilations to the script; likewise Elias Koteas shows up in what seems like a vestigial remnant of something greater as the hitman whose five-year-old mistake ruined Will's life.

The one certain problem is that *Dream House* was edited by suits at Morgan Creek Productions after friction between Sheridan and the company caused the director to be tossed from the editing room. Morgan Creek, I should remind you, is the studio previously responsible for replacing Paul Schrader with Renny Harlin during the *Exorcist: The Beginning/Dominion: Prequel to the Exorcist* debacle of 2004-05. (Morgan Creek filed for bankruptcy in May – the creative bankruptcy has been going on for some time longer.)

A hasty, ludicrous last act erases any of the goodwill earned by Sheridan's attention to old-fashioned scene-by-scene dynamics. The climax brings back the tertiary character of Ann's ex-husband Jack (Marton Csokas), earlier given some crowbar-subtle cutaways that are meant to fulfil the role of 'foreshadowing'.

And yet it's not all bad: Craig has some vividly sorrowful scenes that still move one, despite the complete lack of storytelling cadence around them; and Sheridan, a fine director of children, gets good unaffected performances from real-life sisters Claire and Taylor Geare. You can spot the traces of what might be attempted visual patterns, of crossovers between dream and reality, but they're now as so many bits of broken masonry. Looking over the ruins of *Dream House*, it's impossible to say if there was ever a movie here; what's certain is that there isn't one now. ♦♦ **Nick Pinkerton**

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CREDITS

Produced by
James G. Robinson
David Robinson
Daniel Bobker
Ehren Kruger
Written by
David Loucka
Director of
Photography
Caleb Deschanel
Edited by
Glen Scantlebury
Barbara Tulliver
Production Designer
Carol Spier
Music
John Debney
Sound Mixer
Bruce Carwardine
Costume Designer
Delphine White
Visual Effects
Cosa VFX
Digiscope
EFX/Prasad, India
Gradient Effects
Spin VFX

©Morgan Creek
Production
Companies
James G. Robinson
presents a Morgan
Creek production
A Bobker/Kruger Films
production
Executive Producers
Rick Nicita
Mike Drake

CAST

Daniel Craig
Will Atenton
Naomi Watts
Anni Patterson
Rachel Weisz
Libby
Marton Csokas
Jack Patterson

Elias Koteas
Boyce
Jane Alexander
Dr Greeley
Taylor Geare
Trish
Claire Astin Geare
Dee Dee
Rachel Fox
Chloe Patterson
Brian Murray
Dr Medlin
Bernadette Quigley
Heather Keeler
Sarah Gadon
Cindi

Dolby Digital/Datasat
Digital Sound/SDDS
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Warner Bros
Distributors (UK)

8,258 ft +15 frames

Everything Must Go

USA 2011

Director: Dan Rush

Certificate 15 96m 45s

Many comic actors have the yen to play 'serious' parts, even when that effort effaces what makes them special as performers to begin with – anyone might've played Peter Weir's Truman, after all, but only Jim Carrey could've been Ace Ventura. Will Ferrell previously played 'small' in *Stranger Than Fiction* (2006) and now stars in downbeat *Everything Must Go* as middle-aged drunk Nick Halsey, who loses his job on the same day that his wife locks him out of their suburban home and throws all his possessions on the lawn. The film takes the premise of the booze, the front-lawn living room and little else from Raymond Carver's very short story 'Why Don't You Dance?', fleshing out the skeletal prose with sad-sack indie-comedy elements.

Slipping unnoticed through US theatres, *Everything Must Go* isn't likely to garner Ferrell any great advance in his reputation, but he gives a valid and unshowy performance. Famous as the most manic and fervid of comics, he plays sedate and depressed here. What desperate energy he has at the film's opening troughs out as Nick spends several days on the lawn, office casual clothes turning to pissed-in sweats. The first morning that he's awakened by lawn sprinklers he's harassed into action; the second morning, he can't be bothered. He speaks in a low, rueful voice and slurs his timing – even when he spies a punchline, he lets it slip by like a lazing cat who won't pounce. (What's missing in the performance is the hint of mean-drunk threat that a subplot about a co-worker assault charge seeks to inject, something to make Nick slightly more ambivalent.)

The risks involved in making a film about a character nearly catatonic with drink and self-pity, set almost entirely in a front yard, are obvious: this is material that could easily succumb to its subject's contagious apathy. And with its overall air of bleary indirection and gently fretted soundtrack guitar, *Everything Must Go* often does exactly that, its subtle touch feeling like no touch at all.

This is where the give-and-take with a really ace supporting cast might've helped. On hand are newcomer Christopher C.J. Wallace (son of rapper Christopher Wallace, aka Notorious B.I.G.) as local kid Kenny, Rebecca Hall as sympathetic neighbour Samantha, and Michael Peña as Garcia, a detective who's also Nick's AA sponsor. No one is less than believable but first-time writer-director Dan Rush seems to have flattened the performances to achieve realism, instructing his cast to speak in the same blank, limping cadence, with generous empty space between line-readings. The result is a 'realistic' evenness threatening monotony, a feeling with each new scene that we've been here before.



Anchorless man: Will Ferrell

The exception comes with the appearance of Laura Dern, playing the high-school acquaintance Nick looks up after rediscovering her yearbook inscription, injecting a bit of spirit into proceedings as a never-was actress delighted to describe her greatest career triumph – a Japanese

beer commercial with Brad Pitt. Watching Ferrell react to what she gives out, registering both his attraction to her vivacity and his distraction in the banality of her story, you believe you're seeing an actor of real range.

♦♦ Nick Pinkerton

CREDITS

Producers
Marty Bowen
Wyck Godfrey
Screenplay
Dan Rush
Based on the short
story *Why Don't You*
Dance by Raymond
Carver
Director of
Photography
Michael Barrett
Editor
Sandra Adair
Production Designer
Kara Lindstrom
Music
David Thom

Sound Mixer
Michael 'Koffy' Koff
Costume Designer
Mark Bridges

©Everything Must Go,
LLC
Production
Companies
A Temple Hill
Entertainment
production in
association with
Cowntown Cinema
Ventures and
Nationlight EMG
Executive Producers
Scott Lumpkin
Celine Rattray
Martin Bowen

Bill Hallman
Marc Erlbaum
J. Andrew Greenblatt

CAST

Will Ferrell
Nick Halsey
Rebecca Hall
Samantha
Christopher C.J. Wallace
Kenny Loftus
Michael Peña
Detective Frank Garcia
Laura Dern
Deilah Armstrong
Rosalie Michaels
Kitty

Stephen Root
Elliot
Glenn Howerton
Gary

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
G2 Pictures

8,707 ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS Suburban Arizona, present day. Middle-aged Nick Halsey loses his sales job because of his drinking. He comes home to find that his wife has changed the locks on their house, blocked their joint bank account and put all his possessions on the front lawn. He decides to make the lawn his living room, and sits drinking beer in front of his disapproving neighbours. Local detective Garcia, who is Nick's AA sponsor, arranges for Nick to get a yard-sale licence to give his behaviour some appearance of legitimacy. Nick strikes up a relationship with tubby adolescent Kenny, hiring him as his 'shop assistant' and teaching him the ropes of salesmanship. He also becomes friendly with neighbour Samantha; she is pregnant and her husband is away.

The day of the yard sale arrives and all Nick's belongings are sold. Having freed himself of his possessions he goes to see Garcia, only to discover that his wife is staying with his friend. Nick accepts that these circumstances are the result of his actions, and signs the divorce papers that his wife has sent via Garcia.

50/50

Canada/USA 2011

Director: Jonathan Levine

Certificate 15 99m 54s

50/50 bears out its title, and not only in the way it intends. As the punning strapline on the UK release poster ("It takes a pair to beat the odds") suggests, the film is about male friendship – in this case between Adam and Kyle, high-school friends and co-producers at a Seattle public radio station – and masculinity, even virility, as a folk cure in the fight against cancer. But within that conceit the film itself also seems split, between a self-deprecatingly heroic narrative that butches up the principle of the women's cancer film (*Steel Magnolias*, *Beaches*) by fusing it with Judd Apatow-style comedy and a brave attempt to boldly go where bromance hasn't ventured before. When Kyle tells Adam that, given his diagnosis of a rare spinal cancer, "If I was your girlfriend, I'd be sucking your cock every 30 minutes and baking you cookies," the film approaches an explicit acknowledgement of the emotional and erotic charge of the friends' relationship and its significance in contemporary culture – but seconds later Kyle is advising Adam to use his diagnosis, and cute shaven head, to pick up women.

Likewise the film seems at once insightful about the binds of straight masculinity, with its pressure to tough things out, and determined to raise laughs at the expense of its female characters, who are either suckers for Kyle's sob story about Adam, "irrational loons" for really caring (Adam on his mother) or heartless bitches like Adam's girlfriend Rachael, who dares to have her own ambitions. Anna Kendrick has the most rounded role as Katherine, a graduate therapist appointed to treat the prickly Adam and a direct descendant of Diane Keaton's Annie Hall: kooky, nervy and smart but willing to put Adam's needs above professional ambition and decorum.

Katherine's untidy car, strewn with the detritus of fast food, types her all too neatly as a caring professional who doesn't take care of herself. The opening of the film is equally efficient at signalling Adam's character-by-numbers: he's jogging in the early morning (health-conscious) and stops at a red light, even though there are no cars (cautious). His colour-coded T-shirts are neatly stacked (anal) but he offers Rachael a drawer for her messy things (he's not commitment-shy). He talks to Kyle about his sex life while in line for espresso (he's metrosexual) but doesn't respond to Kyle's cruder humour.

Adam's response to his illness is equally by the book – and the book is Robert McKee's *Story*. For very understandable reasons, the film imposes the neatness of a three-act structure on Will Reiser's autobiographical cancer narrative, but in doing so runs the risk of turning its unique dramatic potential into nothing more than movie-of-the-week smoothness. This finessed structure



Halfway house: Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Seth Rogen

comes coupled, *Dawson's Creek*-style, to multiple scenes of the impeccable Joseph Gordon-Levitt looking pained but never bruised, bloated, nauseous or less than gorgeous to an indie-cred sentimental soundtrack: Radiohead's 'High and Dry' follows Adam's diagnosis, and the film ends with Eddie Vedder's 'Yellow Ledbetter'.

Set in Seattle (though largely filmed in Vancouver), *50/50* showcases a quintessentially West Coast sensibility in its Michael Moore-style evangelism for the welfare state: Adam works for public radio, is treated with blistering

efficiency by public healthcare and gets around on public transit. This is a melodrama for the Douglas Coupland-reading grunge generation, for whom affectlessness is a lifestyle choice much like coffee. Adam may listen to Thom Yorke's keening and Vedder's yearning, but his potentially fascinating emotional responses, whether concerning Kyle or the politics of healthcare, are frustrated as much by the needs of the film's structure as by the essence of his character, and are not able to find a voice of their own.

♥ Sophie Mayer

CREDITS

Produced by
Evan Goldberg
Seth Rogen
Ben Karlin
Written by
Will Reiser
Director of Photography
Terry Stacey
Editor
Zene Baker
Production Designer
Annie Spitz
Music
Michael Giacchino
Sound Mixer
Shane Connelly
Costume Designer
Carla Hetland

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Production Companies
Summit Entertainment presents in association with Mandate Pictures a Point Grey production
With the participation of the Province of British Columbia Production Services Tax Credit, The Canadian Film or Video Production Services Tax Credit
Executive Producers
Nathan Kahane
Will Reiser

CAST

Joseph Gordon-Levitt
Adam Lerner
Seth Rogen
Kyle
Anna Kendrick
Katherine
Bryce Dallas Howard
Rachael
Philip Baker Hall
Alan
Serge Houde
Richard
Andrew Airlie
Dr Ross
Matt Frewer
Mitch
Peter Kelamis
Phil

Jessica Parker
Kennedy
Jackie
Anjelica Huston
Diane

Dolby Digital/Digital
Sound DTS/SDS
In Colour

Distributor
Lionsgate UK

8,991 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS Seattle, the present. Radio producer Adam Lerner is told by his doctor that his chronic backache is the symptom of spinal cancer. At chemotherapy sessions, Adam meets two older male patients, Mitch and Alan, who offer him guidance and medical marijuana, and also psychotherapy, to be administered by recent graduate Katherine. Adam is resistant to Katherine's advice, and struggles to accept support either from his girlfriend Rachael or from Diane, his protective mother. He is more comfortable in the company of his high-school friend and co-producer Kyle, who uses Adam's diagnosis to obtain sympathy sex and – after causing Adam to dump Rachael for infidelity – becomes his dating wingman and sole support. Facing surgery and feeling very bleak after Mitch's death, Adam begins to open up to Kyle and also to Katherine and his parents. The risky surgery is a success. With Kyle's help, Adam makes a physical and emotional recovery and begins a relationship with Katherine.

First Night

United Kingdom 2010

Director: Christopher Menaul

Certificate 15 116m 20s

A jolly, posh romp with more than a hint of village hall am-dram about it, *First Night* follows the fortunes of a set of opera performers who are drafted in to participate in a rich landowner's vanity production of *Così fan tutte*. Sir Adam Drummond (Richard E. Grant) wants to play Don Alfonso; he also wants to reconnect with an old friend, Celia (Sarah Brightman), for whom he carries a torch. Other participants include classy siren Nicoletta (Mia Maestro), recently rejected from a much more prominent production at La Scala; earnest director Philip (Oliver Dimsdale) and his nervy singer girlfriend Tamsin (Emma Williams); rough but gifted Tom (Julian Ovenden); and affable gay bloke Martin (Nigel Lindsay). Inevitably, the mischievous partner-swapping spirit of *Così* infects the company.

The tone throughout is exhaustingly playful, with a lot of hyper-emphatic acting and anxious comic mugging. Obvious points are laboured – someone singing well is signalled by everybody else in the room exchanging looks of blissful appreciation, while states of shock or woe prompt popping eyes and gurning mouths. It's wearily infantile, this mode of delivery. If you're expecting your audience to be au fait with Mozart, why simultaneously condescend to them by feeding them such cartoonish responses? A light comedy this might be, but it would still benefit from a sense that something real is at stake for the characters. The plotting and exposition too are prone to amateurish missteps, with a lot of terribly pushy signposting of what's going on ("It seems to be one of those evenings when everyone is pairing off," someone says on the evening when everyone pairs off) and some singularly pointless narrative asides. At a production meeting everyone goes into spasms of panic at the mention of rain – apparently no one has pondered the impact of weather on their lavish outdoor production. Whatever will they do if it rains? Much anxious rhubarbing. The costumes! The orchestra! Come dress-rehearsal night, sure enough it rains. But then they just do the rehearsal in the ballroom, and it goes smoothly, and there's no further mention of rain. It's such an utterly functionless



Richard E. Grant, Sarah Brightman

sequence that it almost scores points for surrealism.

A light mood and lovely music – with singing skilfully mimed by the cast – sustain the energy, but the didactic script and lack of directorial subtlety rob the character work and storytelling of pleasure. **Hannah McGill**

CREDITS

Produced by
Stephen Evans
Selwyn Robert
John Spiers
Written by
Christopher Menauf
Jeremy Sams
Based on an idea by
Stephen Evans, Sir John
Mortimer
Director of
Photography
Tim Palmer
Editor
St. John O'Rourke
Production Designer
Stuart Walker
Sound Designer
Colin Chapman
Costume Designer
Phoebe De Gaye

©Così Film Production
Production Company
Renaissance Films
presents a Così
production of a
Christopher Menauf film
Executive Producers
Stuart Stradling
Simon Crowe
Rodney Payne

CAST

Sarah Brightman
Celia

SYNOPSIS

Milan, the present. Opera singer Nicoletta attends an audition at La Scala for impresario Paulo Prodi. Meanwhile in the UK director Philip auditions Tom for a small-scale production funded by Sir Adam Drummond; inexperienced Tom pretends to have worked with Prodi. Nicoletta fails her audition and lets Sir Adam know that she is available for his project.

Among the cast arriving at Adam's country mansion are conductor Celia, an old friend of Adam's, and Philip's singer girlfriend Tamsin. Rehearsals begin. Adam confesses his love to a sleeping Celia, before realising that she has switched beds and he is talking to Tom. Overhearing what seems to be the sound of lovemaking, he concludes that Celia and Nicoletta are lovers. Adam bets Tom that he can't bed Nicoletta before opening night. Celia deliberately gives Tom faulty advice, resulting in a disastrous dinner date; nevertheless Tom falls for Nicoletta and attempts to cancel the bet. They sleep together. Philip responds to advances from gay cast member Martin. Adam realises that what he thought was sex between Nicoletta and Celia was actually a massage. He declares his love to Celia at last. Nicoletta finds out about the bet, and humiliates Tom by bringing him face to face with Prodi. Prodi employs Tamsin for his new production – a triumph that softens the blow when she catches Philip and Martin together. Tom proves to Nicoletta via a voicemail message that he pulled out of the bet. The production opens.

Footloose

USA 2011

Director: Craig Brewer

Certificate 12A 113m 12s

Like its celluloid kissing cousin *Dirty Dancing* (1987), the original *Footloose* (1984) was quintessentially a product of its time. With the new conservatism and family values of the Reagan era firmly entrenched, both movies saw their teen rebellions against dreary small-town authority kindled by pop music and sweaty dance floors, their blockbuster soundtracks perfectly complemented by the surging popularity of MTV. With this epochal resonance in mind, a new version might seem especially redundant. Then again, with teen dance sagas such as the *Step Up* series and TV's *Glee* currently doing big business, its timing is canny.

The film's setting is the almost dystopian fictional backwater of Bomont, a community lorded over by a busybody preacher, where loud music and unsupervised dancing have been outlawed in the wake of a local tragedy. Enter Ren McCormack (originally played by Kevin Bacon, here by Kenny Wormald), a swaggering kid from the big city with some fancy footwork and a smart mouth, who proves catalytic in sparking a (very dignified) youth revolt. The new film's director, Craig Brewer, relocates Bomont from Utah to Georgia, and makes Ren even more of a fish out of water by having him hail from Boston. Otherwise, everything is more or less identical. The catchy songs – Kenny Loggins's twanging title track, Deniece Williams's 'Let's Hear It for the Boy' – are present and correct; the love triangle between Ren, rebellious preacher's daughter Ariel (Julianne Hough) and her knucklehead boyfriend plays out as before; and Miles Teller sounds uncannily like his 1984 counterpart, the late Chris Penn, as Ren's goofy wingman Willard. The original's big set pieces, meanwhile, have been predictably ramped up: an already laughable game of chicken with racing tractors here becomes a ridiculous demolition derby featuring exploding school buses, while Ren's much parodied dance of fury around a derelict factory is given extra elbow grease.

It's fair to say that Brewer brings something new to the table in snatches – the affinity with hip-hop he displayed in his 2005 film *Hustle and Flow* (2005)

SYNOPSIS

US, the present. After the death of his mother, teenager Ren McCormack moves from Boston to live with his aunt and uncle in the small town of Bomont, Georgia. He soon gets into trouble with the law for playing loud music while driving, and learns that amplified music and unsupervised dancing have been banned in Bomont following the deaths of five teenagers – including the son of influential town preacher Shaw Moore – in a drink-driving incident. At an illicit dance party, Ren is smitten with Moore's rebellious daughter Ariel. Moore stops the party, ordering Ren to stay away from Ariel. Ariel's jealous boyfriend Chuck challenges Ren to a dangerous race; Ren emerges triumphant. Ren and Ariel break curfew to go dancing in a neighbouring town. With the senior prom approaching, Ren organises a petition calling on the council to abolish Bomont's restrictive laws. At a council hearing, he quotes a line from the Bible exalting music and dancing. Moore is impressed but votes to retain the laws. Ariel breaks up with Chuck, who beats her. Ren visits Moore, explaining how he also experienced loss, caring for his dying mother after his father deserted them. Moore repeals the law. Ren accompanies Ariel to the prom.



Unlaced: 'Footloose'

returns momentarily, and there's a light dusting of the gnarly Southern atmosphere inhabiting his eccentric 2006 follow-up *Black Snake Moan*. But the film just doesn't muster enough personality of its own. Wormald and Hough lack chemistry, and more damagingly the big dance sequences never fully catch fire. Viewed now, much of the 1984 *Footloose* flirts with camp – lampooned by the likes of *The Simpsons* and *Flight of the Conchords*. Divested of kitsch, this workmanlike remix is merely unremarkable.

Matthew Taylor

CREDITS

Produced by
Craig Zadan
Neil Meron
Dylan Sellers
Brad Weston
Screenplay
Dean Pitchford
Craig Brewer
Story
Dean Pitchford
Director of
Photography
Amelia Vincent
Edited by
Billy Fox
Production Designer
Jon Gary Steele
Original Score
Deborah Lurie
Sound Mixer
Mary H. Ellis
Costume Designer
Laura Jean Shannon

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Corporation and
Spyglass Entertainment
Funding, LLC
Production
Companies
Paramount Pictures and
Spyglass Entertainment
present a Dylan Sellers,
Zadan/Meron, Weston
Pictures production
A Craig Brewer film
With the participation of
The Georgia Film, Music
& Digital Entertainment
Office, a division of the
Georgia Department of
Economic Development
Executive Producers
Timothy M. Bourne

Gary Barber
Roger Birnbaum
Jonathan Glickman

CAST

Kenny Wormald
Ren McCormack
Julianne Hough
Ariel Moore
Andie MacDowell
Vi Moore
Miles Teller
Willard
Ray McKinnon
Wes Warrick
Patrick John Flueger
Chuck
Kim Dickens
Lulu Warrick
Dennis Quaid
Reverend Shaw Moore
Ziah Colon
Rusty
Ser Darius Blain
Woody
L. Warren Young
Andy Beamis
Brett Rice
Roger Dunbar

Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Paramount Pictures UK

10,188 ft +0 frames

Force

India 2011

Director: Nishikant Kamat

Certificate 15 137m 17s

A current Bollywood trend is to remake hit films from the South Indian movie industry. Typically, such films originate in one of the four South Indian languages – Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam or Kannada – and are remade in each other's languages until finally getting a Bollywood version. *Force*, the latest addition to the list, began life as the Tamil-language *Kaakha Kaakha* (2003), was remade in Telugu as *Gharshana* (2004) and earlier this year in Kannada as *Dandam Dashagunam*. While the original was a taut *policier* with a grim ending, the southern remakes sacrificed some dramatic impact in favour of happy endings. Here, though, director Nishikant Kamat (*Mumbai Meri Jaan*, 2008), while retaining the original ending, manages to make *Force* lose heavily in translation, turning it into an uneasy blend of bloated romance and grisly action.

The film begins promisingly enough with tough-as-nails, tattooed narcotics officer Yashvardhan acting on an informer's tip and assembling a team to decimate India's top drug cartels. Matters rapidly go awry on the editing table as the four operations are intercut with each other and a prior briefing, a technique borrowed from *The A-Team* (2010). Unfortunately, in employing this method, Kamat fails to create a sense of time and place, so crucial to the sequence working. What emerges is a collection of jumbled fragments. At least the incoherence of the action sequence is fast paced, unlike the romance between Yashvardhan and the annoyingly chirpy social worker Maya, which bafflingly takes a full hour of screen time. In a country that's increasingly making genre films, the overlong romantic interludes are a throwback to old Bollywood's kitchen-sink approach. Matters liven up when the narcotics officers kill a drug baron whose brother's plan it was to plant information about their rivals in the first place, in order to eliminate competition. The brother thirsts for revenge and sets about attacking the officers and their families. The film fairly races along now but the periodic breaks for songs kills any momentum.

John Abraham as Yashvardhan is an agreeable enough beefcake and is believable in the action sequences, but his histrionic skills aren't up to the emotional breakdowns required of him from time to time. Genelia D'Souza has made a career out of playing perky young things and her turn in *Force* is no different. The dialogue given to the female characters sometimes sparks to life – at one point Maya hungrily eyes Yashvardhan in a fashion usually reserved for lecherous men in Indian film, saying, "I want to make love to you." Portraying women in such a way is unusually and commendably forward for commercial Indian cinema, but this and some action sequences are the only bright spots in an otherwise

thankless enterprise. Shame, when the source material remains one of the shining examples of modern Indian police dramas.

♦♦ **Naman Ramachandran**

CREDITS

Produced by
Vipul Amrutlal Shah
Writer
Ritesh Shah
Cinematography
Ayananka Bose
Editor
Aarif Shaikh
Music
Harris Jayaraj
Lyrics
Javed Akhtar
Sound
Sanjay Maurya
Allwin Rego
Action Choreographer
Allan Amin

©[TBC]
Production Companies
Fox Star Studios
presents a Sunshine
Pictures Pvt. Ltd
production

CAST

John Abraham
ACP Yashvardhan
Genelia D'Souza
Maya
Vidhut Jamwal
Vishnu
Mohnish Bahl
Atul Kalsekar

Kamlesh Sawant
Kamlesh Sawant
Ameet Gaur
Mahesh Pandey
Shashank Shende
Arvind
Ninad Kamat
Vasu
Raj Babbar
Mukesh Rishi
Sandhya Mridul
Anaita Nair
Kiran Kamarkar

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
20th Century Fox
International (UK)

12.355 ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS Mumbai, the present. Narcotics officer Yashvardhan receives a tipoff from an informer detailing the operations of India's four top drug cartels; he assembles a specialist team – comprising officers Atul, Mahesh and Kamlesh – to bring the cartels to justice. The team systematically destroy the cartels. Yashvardhan meets social worker Maya; they fall in love and decide to marry. It transpires that Yashvardhan's informer was acting on behalf of drug baron Reddy, who used the narcotics officers to eliminate the competition in a plan masterminded by his brother Vishnu. In order to cover the trail leading back to their gang, Vishnu kills the informer. Reddy is apprehended and killed by Yashvardhan and his men during a drug deal. Vishnu vows to exact revenge. Along with his men, he tortures and kills Mahesh and rapes his girlfriend. In spite of the circumstances, Yashvardhan and Maya go ahead with their wedding. Meanwhile Vishnu kidnaps Atul's wife Swati. Vishnu also shoots Yashvardhan and kidnaps Maya. Yashvardhan survives. Vishnu promises to release Swati if Atul kills Yashvardhan. Instead Atul issues a fake bulletin announcing Yashvardhan's death; together the two men set out to rescue Swati and Maya. Atul finds Swati dead and shoots himself. Vishnu asks Kamlesh to meet him in exchange for Maya. Kamlesh meets Vishnu, with Yashvardhan secretly in tow. In the ensuing shoot-out, Vishnu's men are killed. Vishnu kills Maya. A distraught Yashvardhan kills Vishnu with his bare hands.

Four

United Kingdom 2010

Director: John Langridge

Certificate 15 84m 49s

Besides its economy, it's hard to see what appealed to debut director John Langridge in Paul Chionnell's script: a four-hander hostage thriller which, much in the manner of the recent *44 Inch Chest*, sees an angry and revengeful husband have his wife's lover kidnapped, trussed up and secreted in a disused warehouse in order to put the frighteners on him and teach him a 'good' lesson. Though both films exploit the inherent tension and opportunities for verbal sparring such a Pinteresque pressure-cooker provides, *Four* (inadequately, it must be said) seeks more obviously to turn the tables of the genre's male-dominated forms and expectations, at least in the minimal sense of making the wife (the person ultimately to be instructed) the one who ends up controlling the outcome.

In fact, elements of male insecurity are introduced right from the start: Sean Pertwee's Detective, a veteran nasty with, as it turns out, considerable relationship problems of his own, merely indulges the inchoate anger and resentment of his employer Husband (Craig Conway), coaching him in the technical arts and byways of intimidation, interrogation, control, humiliation and the infliction of violence. Of course, in a simultaneously predictable and disappointing twist, it is in fact Detective's wife (Kierston Wareing) who has been abducted along with her boyfriend, priapically proud minor drug-dealer Lover (played with wasted skill by young Scottish Loach alumnus Martin Compston). But, typically of the film's crudity, Wife's ability to overpower, physically and metaphorically, her male oppressors resides not in reason, patience or analytical wit but rather in her dramatically ludicrous exhibitions of animal ferocity, feral unpredictability and tempestuous obscenity ("If I were your wife," she tells Husband disconcertingly, "I'd be squeezing out bastards quicker than you could take a shit!")

Early in the film there are signs of humour and self-awareness – Detective alludes admiringly to Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* and Tony Scott's *Man*

SYNOPSIS England, the present. Vengeful businessman Husband employs thuggish Detective to kidnap his unfaithful wife's lover. Husband and Detective rendezvous in an abandoned warehouse, where the latter has already roped and beaten Lover. To satisfy Husband that he has kidnapped the right man, Detective further pummels and questions the hooded Lover, who finally admits to having had regular sex with Husband's wife in his flat. Informed that Detective has, on his own initiative, also kidnapped Husband's wife, Husband proceeds to a separate part of the warehouse to confront her. However, the hooded victim he finds is unknown to him; she contemptuously tells him that he's out of his depth, then repels his attack with a flaming lighter and finally convinces him to untie her. Detective enters with Lover and declares that the woman is in fact his own wife. Husband and Detective fight; Wife escapes but returns with self-inflicted facial injuries to inform Husband that she has used his phone to contact the police, leaving the line open to incriminate the two men. Lover threatens lethal revenge on all three on behalf of his drug-dealing brother. Wife bludgeons Lover to death with an iron bar. As police officers arrive, Wife triumphantly places the bloody weapon in her husband's hand, ensuring that the two men will be arrested for murder and kidnap.



Blood count: Sean Pertwee

on Fire – but any hope of referentiality or homage is dashed as proceedings descend into increasing implausibility (why don't the variously threatened characters at least attempt to run off?) and inconsequentiality. The unvarying grey of the main set and Raïmond Mirza's rumbling, semi-industrial ambient sound design offer no relief, even if Adrian Brown's cinematography seems at least technically proficient.

♦♦ **Wally Hammond**

CREDITS

Supervising Producer
Craig Conway
Producer
Raïmond Mirza
Writer
Paul Chionnell
Director of Photography
Adrian Brown
Editors
Ben King
John Langridge
Production Design
James Corker
Costume Design
Juliette Digonet
Composer
Raïmond Mirza
Supervising Sound Editor and Designer
Vanessa Tate

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Production Company
Oh My! Productions

presents
Executive Producer
Nina Wadia

CAST

Martin Compston
lover
Craig Conway
husband
Sean Pertwee
detective
Kierston Wareing
wife
George Morris
Sergeant Walker, armed response unit

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
High Fliers Films plc

7633 ft +8 frames

The Future

Germany/USA/France 2010

Director: Miranda July

Certificate 12A 90m 38s

Best known to international audiences for her 2005 Cannes *Caméra d'Or*-winning *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, multimedia artist Miranda July is something of a divisive figure. To say that her neurotic, painfully honest persona – a combination of Woody Allen and Annie Hall – and the twee, stylised, pseudo-existential films that she writes, directs and stars in aren't to everyone's taste is putting it mildly. Those hitherto unconvinced by July's overly sincere shtick are unlikely to be converted by *The Future*, in which the angst of the urban hipster takes centre stage. Fans, however, may well find this is her most elegant and affecting work yet.

Thirtysomethings Sophie (July) and Jason (Hamish Linklater) are a perfectly paired couple of rangy, tousle-headed brunettes who share an LA apartment and seem strangely in sync with each other's eccentricities. But when they decide to adopt a stray cat named Paw-Paw, it becomes clear that they're equally well matched in terms of their neuroses: the prospect of a (cat's) lifetime commitment sees them staring down a dark tunnel into their forties and fifties. And since, as Jason puts it, "50 is the new 60," well then, "that's it."

As impending responsibility hurtles towards them, the couple decide to make the most of the period before Paw-Paw arrives. The results, while inarguably life-changing, are hardly spiriting. Jason, volunteering for an environmental agency, sleepwalks through a series of house calls and eventually ends up on the doorstep of an elderly man who eerily resembles his future self (the late Joe Putterlik, playing himself in this role). Frustrated dancer Sophie meanwhile slips into a self-destructive affair with the much older Marshall. Eventually, the pair find themselves at an impasse. Sophie can't break her soulmate's heart with a confession, but nor, she tells Marshall, can she lie to him. For his part, Jason can't delay hearing the intuited bad news indefinitely, despite his desire to hold back time.

It's at this crisis point that the film takes a pleasingly fantastic turn as, rather than present us with more navel-gazing procrastination, July introduces an element of magical realism. With a little help from a suddenly conversational moon (voiced by Putterlik), Jason, it seems, *can* hold back time – though life carries on in a kind of parallel dimension. The film's final third is bathed in soft surrealism as scenes of an increasingly desperate and exhausted Jason, literally stuck in the moment, are intercut with Sophie's new life with Marshall. She is followed into this by an oversized T-shirt – a kind of adult security blanket – that has suddenly taken on a life of its own, and is visited by strange visions of her ageing friends, first pregnant, then mothers, then grandparents, while she, in a rather



Things to come: Miranda July, Hamish Linklater

different way to Jason, remains static. The bleached-out world she inhabits is contrasted with the shadows of Jason's perpetual night, in which cars, people and animals are frozen shapes through which he weaves. When Jason finally gives in and lets time catch up with itself, both he and Sophie realise that inertia has its own consequences, as they learn that Paw-Paw – our guide and narrator throughout the film – has been euthanised.

It's worth noting that July is married to Mike Mills, whose *Beginners* took up similar themes of commitment phobia

and anhedonia but suffered from a tendency to gild the lily by overdoing the quirk (including another talking animal). But if *The Future* sounds rather self-consciously out-there, it's to July's credit that even the more peculiar scenes are captured with such straight-faced simplicity that they have a genuinely haunting power. July's film is much darker than her husband's, concerned with endings not beginnings, steeped in depression and death, and with little room for redemption or reconciliation. It is all the better for it.

◆◆ Catherine Wheatley

CREDITS

Produced by
Gina Kwon
Roman Paul
Gerhard Meixner
Written by
Miranda July
Director of Photography
Nikolai von Graevenitz
Editor
Andrew Bird
Production Designer
Elliott Hostetter
Music
Jon Brion
Sound Designer
Rainer Heesch

Costume Designer
Christie Wittenborn
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Production Companies
Film4 in association with The Match Factory and Haut et Court with the support of Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg and Filmförderungsanstalt present a Razor Film and GNIK production
Executive Producer
Sue Bruce-Smith

CAST

Hamish Linklater
Jason
Miranda July
Sophie
David Warshofsky
Marshall
Isabella Acres
Gabriella
Joe Putterlik
Joe
Miranda July
voice of Paw-Paw the cat
Angela Trimbur
dance studio receptionist

Mary Passeri
animal shelter receptionist
Ella
real cat
Kathleen Gati
Dr Straus

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Picturehouse Entertainment

8,157 +0 frames

Jack Goes Boating

USA 2010

Director: Philip Seymour Hoffman
Certificate 15 90m 55s

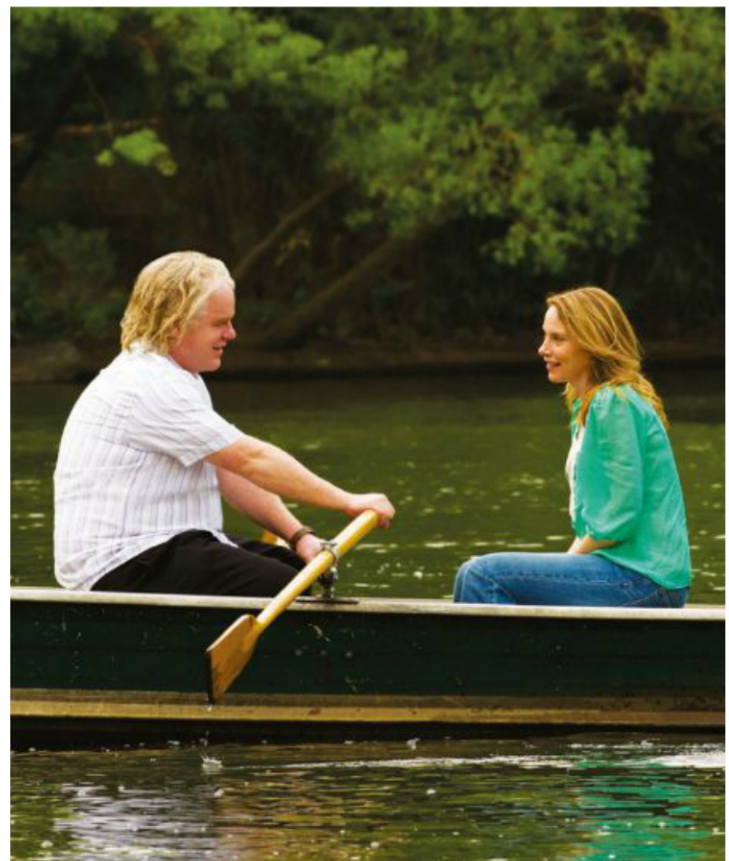
Jack Goes Boating started life as an off-Broadway hit written by Bob Glaudini and produced by the LAByrnth Theater Company in 2007. The male leads, NYC limo drivers Jack and Clyde, were played by Philip Seymour Hoffman and John Ortiz, former co-artistic directors of LAByrnth, and it's a screen adaptation of the play (scripted by Glaudini) that Hoffman has chosen as his directorial debut. Hoffman and Ortiz reprise their roles, as does Daphne Rubin-Vega as Clyde's wife Lucy. The newcomer among the four principals is Amy Ryan in the role of Connie, Lucy's colleague and Jack's love interest.

Given this background, it's not surprising if all the principals – including Ryan, possibly thanks to some exceptionally long rehearsal times – are well into their roles. But this kind of close-knit stage-to-film process can often lead (as it did with the film of Alan Bennett's *The History Boys*) to an airless, endstopped movie – and so it does here. There's a pressure-cooker sense of dialogue – rather too much dialogue, some of the time – churning round and round but never reaching out beyond itself; people state their emotional positions but resonance is lacking. The plot is simple enough, even schematic: one couple, Jack and Connie, tentatively

coming together while the other, Clyde and Lucy, fall apart.

As a director, Hoffman takes an actor's delight in body language, the way people occupy or abdicate their space in reaction to events. Clyde, teaching Jack to swim, urges him to duck underwater, and Hoffman responds with a recoil of the head and a panicky downturned rictus of the mouth, as if offered something repellent to eat. And when Connie's creepily avuncular boss Dr Bob (played by actor-director Tom McCarthy) starts getting over-physical under the guise of congratulating her on a sale, Ryan's stance expresses at once her repulsion and her desperation not to manifest it. Small, finely detailed moments like these keep the film engaging and watchable.

Altogether there's an appealing lack of vanity about this film, both as a project and in Hoffman's portrayal of his character. Jack is a clumsy, even ludicrous figure; perhaps as a tribute to his love of reggae, he sports ratty blond would-be dreadlocks, which he usually conceals – seemingly aware of their inadequacy – under an absurd knitted beanie. Ryan matches him, shedding all hint of movie-star glamour, and the interiors are cramped and scruffy, realistically New York in their cluttered intimacy. True, from an actor of Hoffman's stature and idiosyncrasy you might have expected something more ambitious for his first foray into directing – *Jack Goes Boating* is likeable, slightly old-fashioned indie fare – but to succumb to an obvious metaphor, he's evidently dipping a directorial toe in the water. Next time, perhaps, he'll dive in at the deep end. ◆◆ Philip Kemp



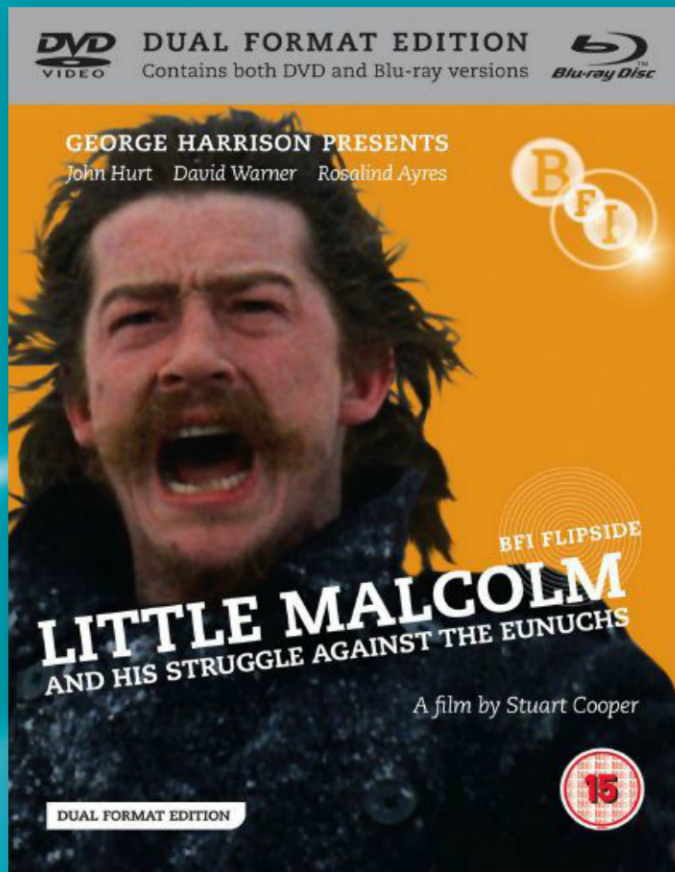
Either oar: Philip Seymour Hoffman, Amy Ryan

SYNOPSIS Los Angeles, the present. Thirtysomething dance teacher Sophie and her boyfriend Jason find an injured cat on the street and take it to a shelter. They offer to adopt it in a month's time, after its wounds have been treated. While visiting the cat at the shelter, Jason buys a drawing of a young girl from her father, Marshall. The impending adoption of the cat, named Paw-Paw, throws the couple into a crisis about their future. Promising to make the most of the next 28 days, they quit their jobs. Jason volunteers for an environmental agency, while Sophie begins making films of herself dancing and streaming them online.

Jason meets an elderly man who reassures him about the future. Sophie, however, finds herself creatively blocked. After she discovers Marshall's phone number on the back of his picture, she telephones him; they become friends, and then begin an affair. When Sophie attempts to confess her infidelity, a distraught Jason pauses time to stop the relationship's inevitable demise. As he and Sophie sit motionless in their darkened bedroom, we see glimpses of Sophie's new life with Marshall. Eventually Jason gives up, and restarts time.

In the present, Jason and Sophie realise that they have missed collecting Paw-Paw, who has consequently been euthanised. A penitent Sophie returns to the apartment she shared with Jason. As she climbs into bed, he tells her she can only stay one night.

GEORGE HARRISON PRESENTS LITTLE MALCOLM



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Mike Leigh

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Daily Mail



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CREDITS

Produced by
Marc Turtletaub
Peter Saraf
Beth O'Neil
Emily Ziff
Screenplay
Bob Gludini
Based on his play
Director of
Photography
Mott Hupfel
Edited by
Brian A. Kates
Production Designer
Thérèse DePrez
Music
Grizzly Bear
Sound Mixers
Jeff Pullman
Christof Gebert
Costume Designer
Mimi O'Donnell

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Overture Films, LLC
Production
Companies
Overture Films and Big
Beach presents a Big
Beach and Cooper's
Town production in
association with The
LABYrinth Theater
Company and Olfactory
Productions
Executive Producers
Philip Seymour

Hoffman
John Ortiz

CAST

Philip Seymour
Hoffman
Jack
Amy Ryan
Connie
John Ortiz
Clyde
Daphne Rubin-Vega
Lucy
Richard Petrocelli
Uncle Frank
Tom McCarthy
Dr Bob
Salvatore Inzerillo
Cannoli
Shawna Bermender
Becky

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Trinity Filmed
Entertainment

8,182 ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS Present-day New York, winter. Jack, a shy man in his forties, is a limo driver who dreams of getting a job with the MTA (Metropolitan Transport Authority). His friend and fellow driver Clyde is married to Lucy, who works at a Brooklyn funeral home. The couple decide to get Jack together with Lucy's colleague Connie, another shy loner. Jack and Connie's first meeting, over dinner at Clyde and Lucy's apartment, is awkward, though they feel a tentative mutual attraction. Connie tells him she'd love to go boating in the summer. This worries Jack since he can't swim. Clyde starts giving Jack swimming lessons at a pool in Harlem. Jack applies to the MTA.

Connie is attacked on the subway; Jack visits her in hospital and promises to cook a meal for her. Since he can't cook, Clyde proposes he take lessons from 'the Cannoli', a pastry chef at the Waldorf and Lucy's sometime lover. Clyde, who takes evening classes in economics and has a crush on his tutor, confides that he believes Lucy's affair with the Cannoli is still ongoing.

Jack makes progress with swimming and cooking. He and Connie go to bed together but it's not a success. At Clyde and Lucy's apartment, Jack prepares a meal for all four of them. Clyde abruptly leaves just as Connie arrives; he later returns drunk with some dope. Lucy produces a hookah and all four get high, forgetting the food, which burns. The Cannoli arrives, having been invited by Clyde, but Lucy pushes him out, slamming the door on his hand. Clyde and Lucy have a flaming row while Jack and Connie leave.

Clyde and Lucy split up. In the summer, Jack – now accepted by the MTA – takes Connie boating in Central Park.

Judy Moody and the Not Bummer Summer

USA 2011

Director: John Schultz

It may be wrong to hate a little girl, but *Judy Moody and the Not Bummer Summer* could push adult viewers to that extreme. At the start of the summer holidays, Judy Moody (13-year-old Australian actress Jordana Beatty, a convincingly American brat) is ready to boss all her friends into taking on a series of dares. Luckily for Rocky (Garrett Ryan) and Amy (Taylor Hender), their parents have out-of-town plans for them – which only leaves poor four-eyed Frank (Preston Bailey) to push around. With her parents off in California looking after her ailing grandmother, Judy is essentially left to her own devices under the benevolent gaze of self-consciously loopy Aunt Opal (Heather Graham). Judy torments poor Frank, bullying him into trying to cross a creek on a tightrope when he just wants to eat ice-cream instead, inevitably ending with them both in the water.

Judy's not just moody but a shrill terror who demands to be the perpetual centre of attention – not unrealistic, and perhaps this will gratify small children, but it makes the film a grating chore for anyone older. From the opening scenes of Judy petulantly freaking out about her parents' inability to pay for a summer vacation in Borneo, then retreating to sulk in her room for the rest of the season, it's hard to work up any empathy for her. Since the plot mostly consists of her hectoring others about the importance of doing what she wants to do, it's a case of steadily diminishing returns on zero to begin with.

Director John Schultz, a veteran purveyor of mediocre children's films (*Aliens in the Attic*, *Like Mike*) and his regular editor John Pace get reasonably ambitious with the dissolves – such as a smooth comic-book-panel cut from Judy pedalling her bike down the street straight into her kitchen – and other interesting gestures for the usually technique-poor world of children's films. But such nice attempts at jazzing up basically



Heather Graham, Jordana Beatty

standard-issue kids' fare are buried not only underneath Judy's black-hole ability to devour everything around her and refashion herself as the negative centre of gravity, but also by endless scatological references (induction into Judy's gang for some reason involves being urinated on by a toad, as the kids snicker, "You're toad-ally cool"). Shrill and unrelenting, *Judy Moody* lowers the bar for children's entertainment while actively encouraging its target viewers to think of every other child and adult around them as an easily-pushed-about non-entity. **➔ Vadim Ríčov**

CREDITS

Producers
Sarah Siegel-Magness
Gary Magness
Written by
Kathy Waugh
Megan McDonald
Based on the *Judy Moody* book series by
Megan McDonald
Director of
Photography
Shawn Maurer
Editor
John Pace III
Production Designer
Cynthia Charette
Music Composed
by/Score Conducted
and Produced by
Richard Gibbs
Supervising Sound
Designer
Scott Sanders
Costume Designer
Mary Jane Fort

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Production
Companies
Relativity presents a
Smokewood
Entertainment
production
A John Schultz film
Executive Producers
Bobbi Sue Luther
Andrew Sugerman
Ryan Kavanaugh
Tucker Tooley

CAST

Heather Graham
Aunt Opal
Paris Mosteller
Stink
Preston Bailey
Frank
Garrett Ryan
Rocky
Taylor Hender
Amy
Jaleel White
Mr Todd
Jordana Beatty
Judy
Janet Varney
mom
Kristoffer Winters
dad
Sharon Sachs
Rose
Ashley Boettcher
Jessica Finch
Cameron Boyce
Hunter
Jenica Bergere
Rocky's mom
Jackson Odell
Zeke

Dolby Digital/DTS/
SDDS
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Universal Pictures
International UK & Eire

8,257ft +8 frames

Junkhearts

United Kingdom 2011

Director: Tinge Krishnan

This modest British production illustrates the pitfalls of building a film around a relationship that lacks the dramatic flexibility and richness to sustain a full 90 minutes. Writer Simon Frank's odd-couple scenario brings together Eddie Marsan's fraying, lonely, middle-aged army vet Frank and Candese Reid's streetwise teenage runaway Lynette to work through a predictable succession of mutual antipathy, gradually earned trust, betrayal and so forth. Enigmatic flashbacks to a blood-splattered woman, combined with Frank's drink-fuelled jitters in the opening scene, flirt initially with the suggestion that he may be some sort of killer, but this ruse only lasts so long, since his evident kindness in giving lippy-but-needy Lynette a roof over her head leads to growing mutual respect. Notwithstanding first-time director Tinge Krishnan's would-be moody use of slow-mo snippets and the odd ominous music cue, it's pretty obvious from the outset where this one's going: childless father meets fatherless child. And actually, the mid-section where their friendship blossoms is probably the best thing in the film, since both actors relax into their roles, relieved of the duty to be 'intense', and we're briefly warmed by the notion of compassion and humanity reaching across a cultural and generational divide.

All well and good, except that for the purposes of keeping the drama ticking over to feature length the story then has to dismantle this happy moment (even though the seasoned viewer will surmise that whatever crisis unfolds will merely be a prelude to a final-reel reconciliation). At which point one must mention the film's other storyline, a cursory affair with Romola Garai as a narcotics-hoovering city type with promiscuity issues, an infant daughter and a very understanding childminder. This strand occupies significantly less screen time than the main thrust of the film, and its appearance is so intermittent that one's tempted at times to think it's been forgotten. The fact that it takes place in a milieu completely removed from the rest of the story is clearly meant to intrigue the audience as to how these separate elements will link up – but we live in a Paul Haggisian universe these days and unlikely connections are there to be forged, coincidence and credibility be damned.

The big reveal is at once groan-worthy and visible from miles off, but by then *Junkhearts* has mightily tried our patience with the entry of Lynette's truly awful boyfriend Danny, as played by Tom Sturridge with a resistible combination of effortful Ulster accent and hip-hop attitude (complete with woolly hat). Much of the later stages are devoted to manoeuvring Danny out of the picture, roping in subsidiary characters and dissipating our investment in the bond between Frank and Lynette.

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In short, the whole thing becomes tiresome indeed, but it provides the British independent sector with yet another lesson in the doom awaiting those who proceed with a script that just doesn't stack up. The performers do what they can, director Krishnan hustles and bustles with the camera, but it's all to little avail.

♦♦ Trevor Johnston

CREDITS

Produced by

Karen Katz

Written by

Simon Frank

Cinematography

Catherine Derry

Editing

Alastair Reid

Production Design

Kristian Milsted

Original Score

Christopher N Bangs

Sound Design

Adrian Rhodes

Costume Design

Camille Benda

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Production Companies

Hustle Productions

present a Coded

Pictures film in

association with

Disruptive Element

Films

Executive Producers

Charlie Parish

Nicola Parish

Andrew Eaton

Jeremy Gawade

CAST

Eddie Marsan

Frank

Tom Sturridge

Danny

Romola Garai

Christine

Candese Reid

Lynette

John Boyega

Jamal

Scott McNess

Carson

Bhasker Patel

Hasan

Nabil Elouahabi

fisherman

Valerie Gogan

Evie

Shaun Dooley

Josh

Chris Coghill

banker

In Colour

[1.78:1]

Distributor

Soda Pictures

Killer Elite

Australia/USA/

United Kingdom 2011

Director: Gary McKendry

Certificate 15 116m 10s

A theoretically good story very badly told, *Killer Elite* is a frustrating film which by sheer ineptitude belies the critical commonplace that pulp stomachs the hard truths prestige features are too polite to mention. After the previous Jason Statham vehicles *Death Race* (2008) and *The Mechanic* (2011), one might have expected a remake of Peckinpah's *The Killer Elite* (1975), but no. Like *The Bank Job* (2008) this is 'based on' real events. Statham plays ex-mercenary Danny, brought out of retirement by an oil sheikh to kill three SAS men held responsible for the deaths of his sons, in return for the life of Danny's ex-partner Hunter, played by Robert De Niro. In his way stands Spike (Clive Owen), another ex-special forces type who provides protection for the Feather Men, a group of British businessmen and bankers with SAS backgrounds, government links and interests in the Middle East.

The film ends with Spike realising that his loyalty to 'the regiment' isn't shared by his paymasters, who are in fact in cahoots with the sheikh's surviving son and don't mind about deaths among the rank and file so long as they get their oil deal. Martial mystique exploited by an unsavoury coalition of government and commerce bent on maintaining British power in the oilfields – all this potential interest is buried, skirted over, fluffed. *Killer Elite* labours instead over self-imposed complications. Some ingenuity goes into the mechanics of killing, almost none into the construction of a mystery. At the heart of it, on paper, are the Feather Men, reminiscent of GB75, the would-be paramilitary outfit set up in the 1970s by SAS founder David Stirling, whose career included running mercenaries in the Middle East. But they remain all too shadowy, a collection of undifferentiated men sitting around a table in the stockbroker belt saying things like, "What we do here is illegal."

Their dastardly scheme isn't so much paid out in clues or discovered as dumped in our and the protagonists' laps at the last moment, in Bond-villain fashion. The narrative is convoluted, and first-time writer Matt Sherring hasn't cracked it: basic questions about who is doing what to whom and why are left hanging, in part because the characterisation, as the simple mathematical product of terrible dialogue and lousy acting in stock situations, is extremely poor. An awful lot of plot is invested in making Danny a reluctant killer but none of it pays off: Statham is visibly uncomfortable delivering lines without a gun in his hand – and he still out-acts De Niro. In the 'pulp' thesis, of course, all this is mere literary frippery; the real cinematic meat is in the action scenes. It's possible to have both – witness Matt Damon's confrontation with Clive Owen in *The Bourne Identity* (2002),



The B-team: Robert De Niro, Jason Statham

dimly recalled in *Killer Elite*'s closing scene – but this has neither. The fights and chases are no more than passable, and without characterisation the intrinsic appeal in seeing two men hitting each other without getting hurt begins to wear thin. Nor did anyone think to come up with a single decent one-liner. All this is a shame, and likely to be taken as a bad parable: pulp should stay pulp, and not try to put on airs. On the contrary, *Killer Elite* would not be improved by more action and less talk: it needed better action, and better talk.

♦♦ Henry K. Miller

CREDITS

Produced by

Sigurjon Sighvatsson

Steven Chasman

Michael Boughen

Tony Winley

Screenplay

Matt Sherring

Inspired by the book

entitled *The Feather*

Men by Ranulph

Fiennes

Director of

Photography

Simon Duggan

Film Editor

John Gilbert

Production Designer

Michelle McGahey

Original Score

Johnny Klimek

Reinhold Heil

Sound Recordist

Gary Wilkins

Costume Designer

Katherine Milne

Fight Co-ordinator

Chad Stahelski

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Pty.Ltd

Production Companies

Omnilab Media

presents an Ambience Entertainment production in association with Current Entertainment and Sighvatsson Films, Film Victoria and the Wales Creative IP Fund. With the assistance of Film Victoria. Developed with the assistance of Omnilab Media.

CAST

Jason Statham

Danny

Clive Owen

Spike

Robert De Niro

Hunter

Dominic Purcell

Davies

Aden Young

Meier

Yvonne Strahovski

Anne

Ben Mendelsohn

Martin

Adewale Akinnuoye-

Agbaje

agent

David Whiteley

M16 man

Matt Nable

Pennock

Firass Dirani

Bakhait

Nick Tate

Commander B

Lachy Hulme

Harris

Dion Mills

Fiennes

Dolby Digital/Datasat

Digital Sound/SDDS

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Entertainment Film

Distributors Ltd

10,455 ft +0 frames

Moneyball

USA 2011

Director: Bennett Miller

Certificate 12A 133m 2s

Once a principally blue-collar recreation, baseball has seen its fanbase become increasingly white-collar. With this has come a growing fascination with the back-office, number-crunching, business end of the sport, as reflected in the great success of Michael Lewis's 2003 book *Moneyball*, detailing one team's attempt to buck the odds in the American sport in which, more than any other, disparities in payrolls make it possible to 'buy' championships.

Moneyball is about the imperfect science of men evaluating men – for their sports-dollar value, and in everyday life. Brad Pitt, very good with his new element of middle-aged remorse, stars as Oakland Athletics general manager Billy Beane. There is a short but vital scene where Beane visits his ex-wife and her new husband, a sandal-wearing softie who seems to have been selected solely to be everything Beane isn't. Beane is clearly the alpha male, his replacement beta – but who has the house and the wife?

A sense of fundamentally misunderstanding hierarchy confounds Beane, and it's that well-articulated confusion that makes sense of his chancy courtship of someone as unlikely as Yale economics graduate Peter Brand – played by Jonah Hill, the rotund *Superbad* actor who looks every bit the loser, taking a break from his hoarse, haranguing comedy with this subdued performance, the character freely based on the A's assistant general manager Paul DePodesta.

Moneyball is at its best when dealing in backstage manoeuvring; there is a standout scene with Beane and Brand duetting on multi-line phones and laptop, negotiating trades. This sets up Beane's outflanking of his manager Art Howe, forcing the latter into obeying Beane's personnel decisions. Unfortunately, reflecting an overall one-sidedness, Philip Seymour Hoffman's Howe is a frozen frown, given nothing to compete with in what is clearly intended as Beane's show.

Steven Zaillian and Aaron Sorkin adapted *Moneyball* for the screen and, as with Sorkin's *The Social Network* script, this is an attempt to bring cinematic life to the proselytising for, and putting into practice, of a new idea. When detailing Beane's conversion, the script really sings, but it's unusual that a film so clearly carrying unnecessary girth at 133 minutes seems also frequently written in shorthand.

There are TV shots of games and slow-mo bits of on-field action, but there is no actual baseball, seen in real-time and unmediated, until Beane visits the park to watch the 20th game of the A's unprecedented 2002 streak. The phantom presence of the sport serves the film's theme of the business of baseball – conducted in concrete halls and windowless offices in the bowels of the stadium – as something curiously abstracted from the bucolic game itself.



Beane counter: Brad Pitt, Jonah Hill

The film also tends to reduce what scenes there are with ballplayers into capsulised sports psychology, leaning on sports-movie clichés ("It's hard not to be romantic about baseball," etc).

A nice piece of sour sentimentality, however, concludes *Moneyball*. Beane turns down a big-money offer from the Boston Red Sox so that he can stay

in Oakland near his daughter, thus missing out on Boston's 2004 World Series win (Oakland's drought has since continued). Choosing family over vocation is always, of course, the 'right' decision in screenwriter's terms – yet the last thing we hear on the soundtrack is the daughter's voice, taunting: "You're such a loser, Dad." ♦♦ Nick Pinkerton

CREDITS

Produced by
Michael De Luca
Rachael Horovitz
Brad Pitt
Screenplay
Steven Zaillian
Aaron Sorkin
Story
Stan Chervin
Based on the book by
Michael Lewis
**Director of
Photography**
Wally Pfister
Edited by
Christopher Tellefsen
Production Designer
Jess Gonchor
Costume Designer

Kasia Walicka Maimone
Music
Mychael Danna
Production Mixer
Ed Novick

©Columbia Pictures
Industries, Inc.
**Production
Companies**
Columbia Pictures
presents a Scott
Rudin/Michael De
Luca/Rachael Horovitz
production
A film by Bennett Miller
Executive Producers
Scott Rudin
Andrew Karsch
Sidney Kimmel
Mark Bakshi

CAST

Brad Pitt
Billy Beane
Jonah Hill
Peter Brand
**Philip Seymour
Hoffman**
Art Howe
Robin Wright
Sharon
Chris Pratt
Scott Hatterberg
Stephen Bishop
David Justice
Reed Diamond
Mark Shapiro
Brent Jennings
Ron Washington
Ken Medlock
Grady Fuson

Tammy Blanchard
Elizabeth Hatterberg
Jack McGee
John Poloni
Vyto Ruginis
Pittaro
Nick Searcy
Matt Keough
Glenn Morshower
Ron Hopkins

**Dolby Digital/
DataSat/SDDS**
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Sony Pictures Releasing

11,973ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS California, 2001. Small-budget baseball team the Oakland Athletics (the A's) are eliminated from the post-season playoffs by the wealthy New York Yankees. With his star players picked up by bigger teams, general manager Billy Beane needs to rebuild his squad. He meets Yale economics graduate Peter Brand, who is working for a competitor. Brand preaches a statistics-based methodology known as sabermetrics, which would allow Beane, working with a fraction of the budget of the largest clubs, to build the A's into a winning team. Impressed, Beane hires Brand and together they set about rebuilding the team according to Brand's theories – selecting players based on how often they get on base – despite opposition from scouts and consultants. Recurring flashbacks explain that as a player, Beane himself failed to develop according to expectations. At first the A's underperform, with manager Art Howe resisting Beane and Brand's ideas, but they then begin an unexpected comeback, culminating in a 20-game winning streak – an all-time record in the National League. Despite this, they are stopped in the first round of the playoffs again in 2002. The Boston Red Sox try to recruit Beane, but he decides to stay in Oakland with his team and daughter.

Oslo, August 31st

Norway/Sweden/

Denmark/Germany 2011

Director: Joachim Trier

Joachim Trier impressed critics and audiences with his 2006 debut *Reprise*, and his second feature shouldn't disappoint. Like *Reprise* this is a character study focused on the profound triviality of middle-class aspiration, but whereas the previous film – a tale of two young would-be novelists mishandling both success and failure – drew out the comedy of their fumbling progress, *Oslo, August 31st* is a much darker exploration of frailty and defeat.

Loosely based on Pierre Drieu La Rochelle's 1931 novel *Le Feu follet* (filmed by Louis Malle in 1963), the action takes place on a single day – a day that should mark a hopeful new beginning for ex-junkie Anders (Anders Danielsen Lie), since he's getting out of rehab and going to Oslo for a job interview. It might be his ticket to life as a fully functioning non-addict... but the day is not going to be as simple as that. Diving back into the city, Anders decides to visit a few old haunts on a journey that is part nostalgia, part quest for redemption. With extraordinary delicacy and acuity, Trier then shows us exactly how easily a lost soul unravels.

The viewer is aware that all is not well: Anders has attempted suicide in his very first scene. But like his counsellors, friends and family, we can't quite believe that someone with so much going for him – a good education, people who care – could find it impossible to see a future. And so we're implicated in the suffocating optimism of others through which the desperate Anders has to swim; there's the conspiracy of denial that depends on the fiction that he can simply pick up where he left off with no harm done. Only Anders has the honesty to see that his mistakes can never be made good.

The imagery of drowning and swimming is one to which Trier returns in the course of the film, not only in scenes of literal immersion but even in subtle elements of sound design: when Anders passes through a café door into the street, an abrupt rush of noise suggests a swimmer coming up for air – or perhaps the crash of a diver hitting water and going under. The film is punctuated with such thresholds, its structure sharply alternating between a series of intense conversations – with Anders's old friend Thomas (Hans Olav Brenner), with his prospective employer (Oystein Roger), with a woman sitting glumly alone at her own birthday party (Kjersti Odden Skjeldal) – dropped into long silences as Anders navigates the city. This unblinking surveillance of Anders's every move makes the film troublingly intimate; those silences remind us of the impossibility of ever really getting inside another's head.

None of this would work without the subtle skill of Danielsen Lie, who also starred in *Reprise* and has the priceless



Dependence day: Anders Danielsen Lie

knack of communicating a great deal while appearing to do very little. That this is by no means a depressing film is largely down to him, and to a series of nicely calibrated performances from the likes of Brenner, who is spot-on as Anders's well-meaning but uncomprehending friend. The humour that made *Reprise* so charming also gleams in this film's depths, lifting the sadness and throwing it into relief.

What's really tough to watch is the banality of each encounter, the

curious mixture of vague suspicion and unfocused sympathy that Anders receives, even from his best friend. In a film which repeatedly subverts expectation and deliberately foregrounds its narrative lurches and bumps, it's fitting that its central character never seems to be on the same page as anyone else. The world has one script, and Anders has another. And no one ever hears the right cues, or says the right lines.

◆ Lisa Mullen

CREDITS

Producers
Yngve Sæther
Hans-Jørgen Osnes
Sigve Endresen
Screenplay
Eskil Vogt
Joachim Trier
Based on the novel *Le Feu follet* by Pierre Drieu La Rochelle
Director of Photography
Jakob Ihle
Editor
Oliver Bugge Coutté
Production Designer
Jørgen Stangebye
Larsen
Music
Ola Flottum
Sound Designer
Gisle Tveito

Costume Designer
Ellen Dæhli Ystehede
@Motlys Production Companies
Motlys in co-production with Don't Look Now present a film by Joachim Trier
Financed by Norsk Filminstituttet, Nordisk Film & TV Fund, Storyline Studios, Norsk Film Distribution, NRK - Norsk Rikskringkasting, SVT - Sveriges Television, DR - Danmarks Radio, The Match Factory, Don't Look Now, Motlys

CAST

Anders Danielsen Lie
Anders
Malin Crépin
Malin
Aksel M. Thanke
counsellor
Hans Olav Brenner
Thomas
Ingrid Olava
Rebekka
Oystein Røger
David
Tone B. Mostrøum
Tove
Kjærsti Odden Skjeldal
Mirjam
Petter Width
Kristiansen
Petter
Emil Lund
Calle

Johanne Kjellevik
Ledang
Johanne Renate Reinsve
Renate
Dolby In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles
Distributor
Soda Pictures
Norwegian theatrical title
Oslo, 31. August

Real Steel

USA 2011

Director: Shawn Levy

Certificate 12A 126m 46s

In a rare instance of a strictly accurate credit, *Real Steel* admits that it is "based in part on the story 'Steel' by Richard Matheson". From that 1956 story, which is remembered as the source for a 1963 *Twilight Zone* episode starring Lee Marvin, the film takes the concept of a future in which human boxers have been replaced by robots, though the sport remains essentially unchanged.

Neither 'Steel' nor *Real Steel* even tries to imagine what robot boxing might be like, which should be easier now thanks to the existence of TV gameshows such as *Robot Wars*; instead they project the conventions of old-fashioned boxing movies into lightly science-fictional form. The *Twilight Zone* 'Steel' was the sort of boxing movie typified by *The Set-Up* (1949) or *Requiem for a Heavyweight* (1962), showing the sweaty, brutal, desperate side of the sport – the manager played by Marvin has to pose as a robot and last a round with a machine opponent to pay for repairs for his broken-down pug. *Real Steel*, on the other hand, is the sort of boxing movie typified by *The Champ* (1979) or *Rocky* (1976), in which all cynicism is swept aside by father-son bonding and going the distance rather than giving up – though the film's storyline, bizarrely, is derived very closely from the forgotten Menahem Golan/Sylvester Stallone arm-wrestling movie *Over the Top*

(1987). The film suffers from its extreme predictability, with plot developments signalled well in advance: as soon as a sullen brat is dropped off with an unwilling father for the summer and they start arguing about everything, it's plain that the road will end in tearful hugging, just as the insistent writing off of the 'bot the kid knows is special is an infallible sign that it'll go all the way to the championship bout.

The film is punctuated by mechanical fights which are well directed by director Shawn Levy and certainly amp up the excitement, and Hugh Jackman and Dakota Goyo hit all the right notes as the father who isn't the dead loss he pretends to be and the precocious kid who believes in him (and a robot) against the odds. There's a hint that the robot Atom is more than just a machine, with Goyo's Max vowing "I'll keep your secret" as it seems to show an emotional, sentient response – a line repeated when the deadbeat dad tries to cram a declaration of love into the cheering crowds of the climax. This shows, yet again, how uncomfortable Hollywood is with actual science fiction as opposed to taking a tried-and-true mundane formula and dressing it up in SF clothes.

If there's an absence here it's because Atom – nicely designed and operated – doesn't register as a character in the way the Iron Giant or WALL-E do, and has to share most of its heroic arc with tagalong Hugh Jackman, who isn't allowed to follow Lee Marvin by getting into the ring himself but does take over the controls by shadow-boxing his way to the happy finish.

◆ Kim Newman

CREDITS

Produced by
Don Murphy
Susan Montford
Shawn Levy
Screenplay
John Gatins
Story
Dan Gilroy
Jeremy Leven
Based in part upon the short story *Steel* by Richard Matheson
Director of Photography
Mauro Fiore
Editor
Dean Zimmerman
Production Designer
Tom Meyer
Music
Danny Elfman
Production Sound Mixer
Steve Cantamessa

Costume Designer
Marlene Stewart
Visual Effects and Animation
Digital Domain
Visual Effects
Cantina Creative
Digital Neural Axis Corp
Ockham's Razor
Stunt Co-ordinator
Garrett Warren

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Distribution Companies
DreamWorks Pictures and Reliance
Entertainment present a 21 Laps/Montford Murphy production
A Shawn Levy film
Executive Producers
Jack Rapke
Robert Zemeckis

Steve Starkey
Steven Spielberg
Josh McLaglen
Mary McLaglen

CAST

Hugh Jackman
Charlie Kenton
Dakota Goyo
Max Kenton
Evangeline Lilly
Bailey Talbot
Anthony Mackie
Finn
Kevin Durand
Ricky
Hope Davis
Aunt Debra
James Rebhorn
Marvin
Karl Yune
Tak Mashido
Olga Fonda
Farra Lemkova

John Gatins
Kingpin

Digital Dolby/Datasat Digital Sound/SDDS
In Colour
Prints by
DeLuxe
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Buena Vista International (UK)

11,409 ft +0 frames

IMAX prints
127m 43s
183,922 ft

SYNOPSIS America, the near future. Following the demise of his sport, ex-boxer Charlie Kenton survives by managing the robots that have taken the place of humans in the ring. When his current robot loses to a bull at a county fair, Charlie goes on the run from Ricky, a former opponent to whom he owes money. Charlie is tracked down by lawyers who tell him that his ex-girlfriend has died and that their 11-year-old son Max is about to be given into the custody of his aunt. Charlie persuades the aunt's husband to bribe him to keep Max for the summer and uses the money to buy a new robot, which is written off in an underground bout. Scavenging in a junkyard, Max finds Atom, an obsolete sparring robot with unusual programming – it can imitate a human operator rather than requiring remote control. Father and son bond as Atom proves itself in a series of bouts, though Charlie is all for selling the robot when an offer is made by Farra, owner of champion robot Zeus. Max turns down the offer and issues a challenge to Farra. Beaten up by Ricky, Charlie surrenders a reluctant Max to his aunt, but returns for him when Farra accepts the challenge. Atom enters the ring with Zeus and sustains damage; Charlie demonstrates the moves that keep Atom standing until the final bell. Zeus wins the bout on points but Atom gains a moral, popular victory.

Resistance

United Kingdom 2011
Director: Amit Gupta
Certificate PG 91m 32s

Resistance, adapted from poet Owen Sheers's debut novel, is the antithesis of the shoot-em-up *Inglourious Basterds*-style WWII movie, though like Tarantino's film it plays fast and loose with history. The premise here is that the British have lost the war and the Germans have invaded – not that the filmmakers are much interested in showing the fighting between the resistance and the Nazi occupiers. Their preoccupation is with landscape, the passing of the seasons and characters' interior lives.

On certain levels, *Resistance* seems very old-fashioned. In its portrayal of women working the farms, it harks back to 1998's *The Land Girls* (though the women here are older and less outspoken than Anna Friel and co in David Leland's movie). Its depiction of the relationship between a Welsh farmer's wife and an enemy soldier echoes Michael Radford's equally subtle and slow-burning *Another Time, Another Place* (1983). As a story about a small community in thrall to the Nazis, it even bears a similarity to the Ealing wartime propaganda film, *Went the Day Well?* (1942).

Resistance is courageous in the way it strives to remain faithful to a novel characterised more by its subtlety, lyricism and introspection than by action. Director/co-writer Amit Gupta is ready to hold shots and to rely on the expressions and gestures of the two leads (Andrea Riseborough as farmer's wife Sarah and Tom Wlaschiha as the Nazi officer Albrecht) rather than on dialogue or fast editing. The rugged Welsh countryside – valleys, fields, skylines and forests – is lovingly filmed over different seasons.

Gupta's approach has its drawbacks. The story of the local men who've disappeared and the resistance's fight against the Nazi occupiers is downplayed. Sheers was inspired to write his novel by accounts he heard of a British resistance organisation comprising largely of farmers who planned to go into hiding in the Black Mountains in the event of a Nazi invasion. However, the struggles of this unlikely resistance army aren't dealt with in any depth. Instead, the focus is on the women's day-to-day struggle to keep their farms going.

It's apparent that this is a modestly budgeted affair, with the occasional action sequences lacking scope and dynamism. What holds *Resistance* together are the two central performances. Riseborough (recently seen in Rowan Joffe's *Brighton Rock*) brings a soulful intensity to her role as Sarah, who is at once pining for her husband and drawn to Albrecht; Wlaschiha, meanwhile, plays the German officer as intelligent and sympathetic, but also shows his ruthlessness.

Resistance works well as a mood piece, a meditation on characters trying



Went the day Wales?: Andrea Riseborough

to hold their lives together at a time of huge upheaval. On one level, it's heartening to come across a war movie that eschews genre clichés and by-the-numbers action sequences. The period detail is meticulous and often inventive. What the film isn't, though, is a ripping yarn.

♦♦ Geoffrey Macnab

CREDITS

Produced by
Richard Holmes
Amanda Faber
Screenplay
Amit Gupta
Owen Sheers
Based on the novel by
Owen Sheers
**Director of
Photography**
John Pardue
Film Editor
Chris Barwell

Production Designer
Adrian Smith
**Music by/Piano/
Keyboards**
Mark Bradshaw
Sound Designer
Tony Gibson
Costume Designer
Nigel Egerton

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Limited
**Production
Companies**
Big Rich Films in

association with the
Film Agency for Wales
presents
Supported by the
National Lottery
through the Arts Council
of Wales
Executive Producer
Richard J. Stanforth

CAST

Andrea Riseborough
Sarah Lewis
Tom Wlaschiha
Captain Albrecht
Wolfram
Alexander Doetsch
Steiner
Stanislav Ianevski
Bernhardt
George Taylor
Gernot
Anatole Taubman
Sebald
Nia Gwynne
Sian Griffiths

Sharon Morgan
Maggie Jones
Kimberley Nixon
Bethan Evans
Mossie Smith
Ruth Evans
Melanie Walters
Helen Roberts
Michael Sheen
Tommy Atkins

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Metrodome Distribution
Ltd

8,238 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS Wales, autumn 1944. Farmer's wife Sarah wakes to discover that her husband Tom has disappeared. Britain has been losing the war and the Germans have invaded. Sarah assumes that Tom and the rest of the menfolk have joined the resistance. She and the other local women resolve to keep their farms going.

A German patrol arrives. At first the women ignore the German soldiers. However, as winter comes, the Germans and the Welsh women begin to cooperate. The Germans start wearing civilian clothes and help to work the farm. Commanding officer Albrecht strikes up a rapport with Sarah. He is a cultured man who has reservations about the Nazi regime. He shows Sarah the Mappa Mundi, one of the oldest medieval maps, which he has found hidden in the valley; this, it turns out, is what has drawn the Germans to the area.

Throughout the winter, the Germans and the women are cut off from the outside world. When escaped resistance leader Atkins stumbles into the valley, he is brutally shot. One of the women, Maggie, decides to take her young colt to an agricultural show. There she hears gossip suggesting that the menfolk have been killed. Suspicions about her arise and a resistance fighter heads back to the valley and shoots the colt. Albrecht and his men panic. They realise that they can't stay in the valley since they and the women are now in danger both from the resistance and the Gestapo. Albrecht tries to persuade Sarah to flee with him. She seems to agree and arranges to meet him, but instead sets fire to the Mappa Mundi and heads into the hills.

Reuniting the Rubins

United Kingdom 2011
Director: Yoav Factor
Certificate PG 98m 36s

Still improbably glamorous and youthful at 83, Honor Blackman is oddly cast in Yoav Factor's debut feature *Reuniting the Rubins* as a doddery but determined London Jewish matriarch attempting to get her bickering grandchildren together to celebrate Pesach with her one last time, before age and her dicky ticker take their toll. It's unlikely casting, but then the Rubins are a pretty unlikely bunch: ruthless atheist businessman Danny, who constantly barks into his bluetooth ("In a meeting! Bullet points Nick!") and neglects his moppet son; Andie, a teeth-achingly self-righteous human-rights activist just back from Africa; inscrutable Buddhist monk Clarity; and Yona, an earnest young rabbi more interested in koshering the kitchen than honouring his semi-stranged father. Not simply unlikely but also rather unlikeable, and so two-dimensional a gentle puff of wind might blow them right over.

It's hard to see what drew Blackman and other interesting performers – James Callis (*Bridget Jones*), Blake Harrison (*The Inbetweeners*) – to the project. Not even Timothy Spall, as Blackman's exasperated son Lenny, can work any wonders here. Which is a shame, because the film touches on some potentially fruitful areas: the importance of ritual and tradition in family life; the effects on that family when religion divides rather than unites; and – topically, given the recent release of the documentary *Blood in the Mobile* – a subplot involving the west's mining of so-called blood minerals in Africa.

But the film is so busy trying to warm cockles that it forgets to give us any reason to care about the warring Rubins, much less be bothered whether they are reunited or not. A plot diversion to Africa seems totally at odds with the domestic scale – and presumably budget – of the rest of the film; the soundtrack gets your goat rather than your heartstrings; and a tacked-on moment of jeopardy



Bound together: Timothy Spall

at the end of the film is here and gone without us really registering it.

At one point Danny's son Jake, a vision of cuteness played by Theo 'Horrid Henry' Stevenson, asks his dad how much he earns in an hour, then empties his piggy bank and politely requests eight minutes of his time. If all neglected kids sat around being wistful and endearing in this way, social services would be under a lot less pressure. And anyway, many viewers will think eight minutes with the Rubins is more than enough.

♦♦ Jane Lamacraft

CREDITS

Producers
Yoav Factor
Jonathan Weissler
Written by
Yoav Factor
Director of Photography
Miles Cook
Editors
Anthony Stadler
Ben King
Production Designer
Byron Broadbent
Composer
Tim Attack
Sound Supervisor
Nigel Albermaniche
Costume Designer
Alan Flynn

©Factor Films
Production Companies
Factor Films presents in association with Balagan Productions a film by Yoav Factor
Executive Producer
Ben White

CAST

Timothy Spall
Lenny Rubins
James Callis
Danny Rubins
Rhona Mitra
Andie Rubins
Hugh O'Connor
Yona Rubins
Asier Newman
Clarity Rubins
Honor Blackman
Sarah Rubins, 'Gran'
Theo Stevenson
Jake Rubins
Louise Brealey
Miri Rubins
Blake Harrison
Nick
Claudia Coulter
Marta

Dolby
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment

8,874 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS England, the present. Widower Lenny Rubins is forced to leave his dream cruise when his elderly mother Sarah falls ill. Arriving at the hospital he finds that she has been discharged; he also discovers that she has bought back the old house where he grew up and wants to get Lenny's four bickering adult children together there to celebrate Pesach. Reluctantly, Lenny gets in touch with three of his offspring – businessman Danny, Buddhist monk Clarity and rabbi Yona – but is unable to contact daughter Andie, an activist working in the Congo. He travels to Congo but fails to track her down. Returning to the UK, however, he finds that she's arrived at his home. Attempts to get the bickering siblings together end in rows; the relationship between Andie and Nick is particularly difficult – and worsens when she discovers that his company is involved in mining for 'blood minerals' in Africa. She organises a protest at the launch of his latest product. Andie insists on returning to Africa before Pesach, so Sarah organises a housewarming party instead. After the party she asks Lenny to sit by her bedside until she's asleep; she dies in the night.

At the funeral, Yona's wife goes into premature labour. Yona refuses to let the doctors operate to save his wife's life at the expense of the baby – but miraculously both survive. The siblings celebrate a harmonious Pesach. Lenny embarks on his cruise.



Shorts and suites: Amber Heard, Johnny Depp

The Rum Diary

Director: Bruce Robinson
Certificate 15 119m 49s

"I've got no voice – I don't know how to write like me" is hero Paul Kemp's flatly self-loathing complaint, midway through his snare-strewn sojourn as a hard-drinking journalist caught between denouncing US commercial corruption in 1960s Puerto Rico and being its willing shill. Finding an authentic voice is indeed the *The Rum Diary's* abiding preoccupation, right from the tang of Fitzgerald and Hemingway that Hunter S. Thompson was trying to shake off in this autobiographical early novel, based on his own experiences as an unsuccessful expat hack in San Juan. Not published until 1998, when it had the reflected lustre of his later work, it's brimming with the young writer's own fear of failure and an angry, restless idealism.

Then there's the voice that Bruce Robinson, who wrote and directed this jaunty adaptation, has had to create for his first film in 19 years, substituting his own gift for portraying cheerful dissolution for the more lurid tone and resentful concerns of the novel. Together with producer/star Johnny Depp he's turned it into an origin story, celebrating the birth of Thompson's rage on the page. Shedding characters, office politics and expat parody, Robinson makes the slender plot into a rite of passage, turning Kemp's rum-soaked escapades into comic interludes reminiscent of *Withnail and I* (1987).

Set against the dark, manic, gibbering hallucinations of Terry Gilliam's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998), the film appears a light, almost playful drama, rejoicing in its hero's sozzled scrapes, a Gonzo-free zone. Yet it plants that dissatisfaction with the rapacious American Dream, which was to become Thompson's later obsession, in Kemp's growing horror at the tide of greedy investment that seeks to coopt him as a writer of puff pieces, selling off Puerto Rico as a playground for American tourists at the expense of its native population. There's no *Salvador*-

style immersion in the locals' plight or politics, though, despite Kemp's burgeoning contempt for his colonial countrymen. Apart from kids in a picturesquely squalid shantytown, Puerto Ricans appear largely as surly aggressors, their bars, cockfights, voodoo witch doctor and carnival used for local colour and a hint of native danger, where needed.

Oddly enough, as the corrupt embodiment of the Dream seller, Aaron Eckhart's smooth shark of a property developer Sanderson, and his innocent but lascivious fiancée Chenault (Amber Heard), are the shiniest but least resonant of the film's characters. Far more pointed, and enjoyable, are Richard Jenkins, tossing out jaded aperçus as harried editor Lotterman, and Giovanni Ribisi's scene-stealing, substance-abusing derelict journalist Moberg.

a little touch of Withnail in the night. Depp himself, conveying a wry detachment that expresses itself in that watchful underplaying where a raised eyebrow signals embarrassment or lust, gives Kemp an engaging outline of the younger Thompson. But once an LSD trip has released the writer's mojo, and along with it a propensity for declarations like "I will try and speak for my reader, and it will be a voice made from ink and rage," even he can't support the defiant but deflated ending.

Like many posthumous tributes, *The Rum Diary* has a fond ability to overlook faults, in this case a callow, grandstanding quality in its source, and to overplay the hilarity of youthful folly, especially if it involves 470-proof rum. Depp's celebration of his old friend gives large shots of warmth, but shorts us on dramatic weight.

♦♦ Kate Stables

CREDITS

Produced by
Johnny Depp
Christi Dembrowski
Anthony Rhulen
Robert Kravis
Tim Headington
Graham King
Screenplay
Bruce Robinson
Based on the novel by Hunter S. Thompson
Director of Photography
Dariusz Wolski
Editor
Carol Littleton

Production Designer
Chris Seagers
Music
Christopher Young

©[TBC]
Production Companies
GK Films presents a GK Films/Infinitum Nihil/Film Engine production

CAST
Johnny Depp
Paul Kemp

Aaron Eckhart
Sanderson
Michael Rispoli
Bob Sala
Amber Heard
Chenault
Richard Jenkins
Lotterman
Giovanni Ribisi
Moberg
Amaury Nolasco
Segurra
Marshall Bell
Donavon
Bill Smitrovich
Zimbunger

Andy Umberger
Mr Green
Karen Austin
Mrs Zimbunger
Karimah Westbrook
Papa Nebo

In Colour

Distributor
Entertainment Film Distributors Ltd

10,783 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS Puerto Rico, 1960. Unsuccessful, hard-drinking novelist Paul Kemp joins a failing San Juan paper, and is ordered to write upbeat copy. His piece on the plight of the local poor is rejected. Courted by property developer Sanderson to promote a dodgy upcoming resort deal, Kemp is reluctant, though he is attracted by Sanderson's fiancée Chenault. Arrested with his roommate Sala after a drunken fight with locals, Kemp is rescued by Sanderson. He signs Sanderson's contract, and flirts with Chenault, confessing to her that he can't find his own writing voice. At a carnival Chenault defies Sanderson to dance flirtatiously with local men, who prevent Kemp from rescuing her. Sanderson sacks him. After taking hallucinogenic eye drops, Kemp discovers his own style when writing an enraged essay about corruption in San Juan. Chenault reappears, bruised, and he looks after her. His piece is rejected and the paper is closed down, but Kemp suggests his colleagues publish a final, truth-telling edition despite having no money to print it. Departing for New York, Chenault leaves him \$100. After obtaining voodoo blessings for Sala's cockerel, Kemp bets the money on a cockfight and wins \$6,000 for the print run. The printing presses have been disabled, but a defiant Kemp steals Sanderson's boat and sails away.

A final caption reveals that he married Chenault and became a revered writer.

Shark Night 3D

USA 2011

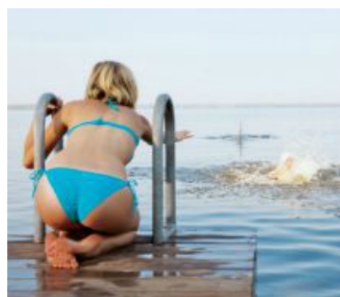
Director: David R. Ellis

Certificate 15 90m 34s

Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) – a conscious riff on 1950s exploitation films like *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* – established the shark-attack picture as a subgenre which, against all odds, continues three and a half decades on. Aside from the odd theatrical release – the pulpy *Deep Blue Sea* (1999), the minimalist *Open Water* (2003) – the form mostly thrives in cable TV and direct-to-DVD fodder like *Spring Break Shark Attack* (2005), *Shark in Venice* (2008) and *Sharktopus* (2010). As the villain of *Shark Night* has noticed, *Shark Week* and other 'when animals attack' actuality shows remain so popular on cable TV that shark snuff movies aren't exactly a stretch of the imagination. As with the more conventional snuff of 2007's *Vacancy*, the mechanics of distribution and the monetisation of murder are left vague in *Shark Night*, so that the film can get on with the business of feeding its attractive young cast to the variety of shark species transplanted into its saltwater lake.

The only reason *Shark Night* has had a theatrical window is that it was shot in 3D, which makes it a long-delayed follow-up to *Jaws 3-D* (1983). As *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* showed as far back as 1954, underwater 3D photography can be literally immersive, and this is notably more stereoscopic when it gets beneath the surface and swims with the sharks, usually towards a bikini bottom or temptingly toned limb. Without matching the shark-eats-a-plane YouTube clip from *Mega Shark vs Giant Octopus* (an otherwise dreary picture), there are several big-toothy-mouth-jumps-right-at-you moments. However, David R. Ellis, billed on the poster as director of *The Final Destination* (the first of that series in 3D) rather than his earlier terror-by-beast disappointment *Snakes on a Plane*, is hampered by the need for a 15 certificate (PG-13 in the US), which means that this can't compete with the chewed-off penis or bisected bare breasts of Alexandre Aja's much more ferocious, far more entertaining *Piranha* remake (2010).

The film is composed entirely of



Pier pressure: Sara Paxton

scenes you've seen before – the early face-off between the redneck locals (Joshua Leonard's character has filed his teeth to shark-points) and the college kids; the friendly policeman who offers a thermos of drugged soup; the dog that survives (and heroically retrieves the ultimate shark-killing boomstick) when humans get chomped; the ranted 'explanation' that gives the tied-up hero time to burn through his bonds. This really could have done with more fresh elements. **Kim Newman**

CREDITS

Produced by
Mike Fleiss
Lynette Howell
Chris Briggs
Written by
Will Hayes
Jesse Studenberg
Cinematographer
Gary Capo
Edited by
Dennis Virkler
Production Designer
James Hinkle
Music
Graeme Revell
Production Sound Mixer
Steven C. Aaron
Costume Designer
Magali Guidasci
Visual Effects
Reliance Mediaworks
VFX
Reliance Mediaworks
Imaging Services, Inc
Switch VFX
Stunt Co-ordinator
Jeff Dashnaw

©Incentive Film
Productions, LLC
Production Companies
Rogue, Incentive Filmed
Entertainment and
Sierra Pictures present a
Next
Films/Silverwood Films
production
A film by David R. Ellis
Executive Producers
Ryan Kavanaugh
Tucker Tooley
Douglas Curtis
Nick Meyer

Marc Schaberg
Matthew Rowland
Clint Kisker

CAST

Sara Paxton
Sara
Dustin Milligan
Nick
Chris Carmack
Dennis
Katharine McPhee
Beth
Donal Logue
Sabin
Joshua Leonard
Red
Sinqua Walls
Malik
Chris Zylka
Blake
Alyssa Diaz
Maya
Joel David Moore
Gordon
Jimmy Lee Jr
Carl
Damon Lipari
Keith
Christine Quinn
Jess
Kelly Sry
Wonsuk
Tyler Bryan
Kyle

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[L85:1]
3D

Distributor
Entertainment Film
Distributors Ltd

8,151 ft +0 frames



Into the woods: 'The Silence'

The Silence

Germany 2010

Director: Baran bo Odar

Certificate 15 118m 59s

Swiss-born writer-director Baran bo Odar's second feature, based on Jan Costin Wagner's crime novel, boasts a knockout opening. In a virtually wordless prologue, morsels of initially oblique visual information – an ominous Steadicam zoom into a nondescript high-rise apartment, the whirr of a projector, the lingering looks exchanged between two men – gradually focus into a chillingly lucid depiction of a traumatic event that clouds the ensuing story. It's an arresting, expertly controlled sequence – but it's also typical of the overemphatic, almost pompous treatment that dogs the film as a whole.

The Silence is punctuated by two seemingly identical sex crimes committed 23 years apart. In the first, a young girl is raped and murdered in an idyllic cornfield by outwardly genial paedophile Peer Sommer (Ulrich

Thomsen) while his appalled young accomplice Timo (Wotan Wilke Möhring) looks on. Timo promptly flees town to forge a new life as a comfortable family man, while the case remains unsolved. But Timo finds himself dragged back into the past when another girl goes missing from the same spot. Like the superior Danish TV series *The Killing*, the film examines the aftermath of tragedy from multiple viewpoints, giving equal space to weary police, anguished parents and tormented perpetrators. Accordingly, Odar and his editor Robert Rzesacz have a hefty ensemble to juggle, from the blustering retired inspector who failed to crack the original case to the bereft mother he's having an affair with. There's also younger detective David Jahn (Sebastian Blomberg), an unstable but predictably intuitive wreck rather too hastily returning to work after a breakdown. This cadaverous, wild-eyed loose cannon unfortunately comes across like a Zucker brothers parody of a renegade cop, putting a dent in the air of sombre credibility aspired to throughout (it's hard to believe Jahn would be allowed to make tea, let alone work high-profile murder cases).

SYNOPSIS Germany, 1986. Timo, a student tormented by his attraction to underage girls, befriends paedophile caretaker Peer Sommer and witnesses the latter's rape and murder of 11-year-old Pia in a cornfield. Traumatized, Timo leaves town.

Twenty-three years later, 13-year-old Sinikka goes missing, and her bicycle is found in the same cornfield. Retired police inspector Krischan Mittich, who worked on the original unsolved crime, is adamant that the cases are linked. He launches an investigation, aided by unstable but intuitive young detective David Jahn. Timo, now a married father of two, is shaken by the news of Sinikka's disappearance. He tracks down Sommer, who denies any involvement. Krischan appears on a television talk show with Pia's mother Elena, angering both the police and Sinikka's parents by insisting that Sinikka has already suffered the same fate as Pia.

Krischan embarks on an affair with Elena. Jahn compiles a list of owners of vehicles similar to the one seen near the cornfield in 1986; Sommer's name is included but he is discounted as a suspect. Guilt-ridden, Timo visits Elena, pretending to be interested in a nearby property. He then commits suicide, driving his car into a lake. While questioning Timo's wife, Krischan discovers child pornography stored on Timo's computer. Sinikka's body is discovered in a lake near the cornfield. Timo is named as the perpetrator of both crimes and the cases are closed, despite Jahn's protests that the evidence from 1986 suggests the presence of two men. Sommer remains at large.

SYNOPSIS Lake Crosby, Louisiana, the present. Local girl Sara returns to spend the weekend at her family home on an island in the bayou with a group of friends from university. At a petrol station, football player Malik and his girlfriend Maya have a confrontation with Sara's ex-boyfriend Dennis and his sidekick Red, but Sara defuses the situation. While waterskiing, Malik is attacked by a shark and loses his arm. When Nick, a medical student, tries to get Malik off the lake, Maya is eaten by a shark and the boat destroyed. Dennis and Red arrive and offer to go for help, taking students Gordon and Beth with them – but they stop the boat in the middle of the lake and feed Gordon and Beth to the sharks. Malik, mad with grief, kills a shark, and Nick finds a camera attached to the fish. When Malik's friend Blake tries to escape on a jet ski, Malik throws himself to the sharks to save him, but Blake is eaten nevertheless. Sabin, an apparently friendly sheriff, arrives and drugs Nick, then knocks out Sara. Sabin, it transpires, is making shark-attack snuff movies with Dennis and Red. Nick throws Sabin to the sharks and sets about rescuing Sara from Dennis, Red and the sharks.

← *The Silence* is handsomely mounted, Odar's sun-drenched widescreen compositions and moody aerial shots making good use of the Bavarian locations. But it can resemble something of an earnest showpiece, where visual gloss and a portentous soundtrack out-muscle thematic depth. Despite the deliberate, slow-burn approach and mosaic structure, there's a curious lack of genuine feeling for the material. Long-festering mysteries memorably crumpled the souls of those investigating them in films such as David Fincher's *Zodiac* (2007), Bong Joon-Ho's *Memories of Murder* (2003) and Sean Penn's *The Pledge* (2001), but it's difficult to gauge the emotional toll here (Jahn's troubles derive from an unrelated personal loss that we never learn much about). Grief, too, is missing an authentically raw presence. There are some tense moments, notably when the older Timo seeks out the man he escaped from decades before; the drama is at its most compelling when it explores their unusual bond, and Thomsen is quietly riveting as Timo's lifelong nemesis.

It's an assured film in many ways, one that marks Odar as a confident technician. But it strains for a gravitas that it hasn't properly earned, tending to buckle under the weight of its own lugubrious self-importance.

►► **Matthew Taylor**

CREDITS

Producers
Jantje Friese
Jörg Schultze
Frank Evers
Maren Lütjhe
Florian Schneider
Baran bo Odar

Written by
Baran bo Odar
Based on the novel *Das Schweigen* by Jan Costin Wagner

Director of Photography
Nikolaus Summerer

Editor
Robert Rzesacz

Production Designers
Yesim Zolan
Christian M. Goldbeck

Music
Pas de Deux
Michael Kamn
Kris Steininger

Sound
Johannes Döberenz

Costume Designer
Katharina Ost

©Cine Plus, Lütjhe & Schneider Film, ZDF

Production Companies
A Cine Plus and Lütjhe & Schneider Film production
In co-production with ZDF - Das kleine Fernsehspiel
In collaboration with ARTE

CAST

Ulrich Thomsen
Peer Sommer
Wotan Wilke Möhring
Timo Friedrich
Katrin Sass
Elena Lange
Sebastian Blomberg
David Jahn
Burghart Klaußner
Krischan Mittich
Karoline Eichhorn
Ruth Wegmann

Roeland Wiesnekker
Karl Wegmann
Jule Böwe
Jana Glaser
Oliver Stokowski
Matthias Gimmner
Claudia Michelsen
Julia Friedrich

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Soda Pictures

10,708 ft +8 frames

German theatrical title
Das letzte Schweigen



Hoodies and baddies: Emma Hartley Miller

Sket

United Kingdom 2011
Director: Nirpal Bhogal
Certificate 15 83m 15s

For a story that's supposedly never told, the one about street gangs in London has had plenty of screen time, in films such as Menhaj Huda's *Kidulthood* (2006) and Saul Dibb's *Bullet Boy* (2004). The latter's lead actor, Ashley Walters, plays another tough guy in Nirpal Bhogal's debut feature *Sket*, a drug baron whose impetuous attack on a passing stranger, a young girl called Tanya, brings him more trouble than he expected. Tanya's sister Kayla (Aimee Kelly) enlists a gang of flinty-eyed, ultra-violent girls to help her exact revenge, and even manages to entangle Trey's girlfriend, the ice-queen Shaks (Riann Steele), in the ensuing mess.

If the girl angle offers a slight twist, the rest of the film suffers from the fact that we've seen so many identical gang-tales before. There seems to be a widespread misconception among British filmmakers that if you throw enough style and attitude at a project you'll come out with a good piece of cinema, when in fact the lifeblood of film is character and plot. Bhogal has worked hard to avoid glossing over the grim realities of London street life and he clearly has a good eye – he creates atmosphere effortlessly and knows how to paint the screen with the saturated chemical tints of urban nightmare. And his cast, particularly Walters and Steele, have enough actorly gas in the tank to chew up miles more challenging emotional territory. If only the film had had the nerve to pursue its most interesting narrative thread – the supposedly submissive Shaks quietly undermining her swaggering boyfriend's powerbase – and left out the predictable protocols

of the scrupulously multicultural girl gang and their rape-obsessed monoculture. Bhogal had all the jigsaw pieces for a neat modern-day *Macbeth* here, but didn't quite manage to put them together.

It's the sense of high drama and operatic tragedy that all these by-numbers gang stories lack. If we're going to turn the blighted lives of the disenfranchised into entertainment, we should at least go beyond the usual striving for banal authenticity and find something fresh and compelling to say about ambition, or destiny, or redemption, or anything *big*.

►► **Lisa Mullen**

CREDITS

Produced by
Daniel Toland
Nick Taussig
Producers
Terry Stone
Paul van Carter
Written by
Nirpal Bhogal
Director of Photography
Felix Weidemann
Editor
Richard Elson
Production Design
Melanie Light
Music
Chad Hobson
Sound Recordist
Matthew Weeks
Costume Design
Guy Speranza

©[TBC]
Production Companies
Revolver Entertainment presents a Gunslinger Films production
A Gateway Films co-production
In association with AV Pictures, Creativity Media and Aquarium
Executive Producers
Ben Baird
Yogita Puri
Ajay Parkash
Mike Diamond
Ajay Chadha
Justin Marciano

CAST

Lily Loveless
Hannah
Riann Steele
Shaks
Aimee Kelly
Kayla
Emma Hartley Miller
Danielle
Adelayo Adedayo
Kerry
Varada Sethu
Kiran
Richie Campbell
Ruds
Katie Foster Barnes
Tanya
Leon Ajikawa
Reet
Ashley Walters
Trey
Michael Maris
Drew
Ashley Chin
Titch
Nish Nathwani
newsagent

In Colour

Distributor
Revolver Entertainment

7,492 ft +8 frames

Snowtown

Australia 2010

Director: Justin Kurzel

The so-called 'bodies in barrels' case, which tallied 11 brutal slayings between 1992 and 1999, remains one of Australia's most notorious crimes, its horrific details of almost unfathomable cruelty ripe for lurid true-crime treatment or yet more lip-smacking 'torture porn'. It's certainly a relief then to report that Justin Kurzel's debut feature is none of these things, yet its accomplished and intelligent investigation of the moral malaise behind the carnage remains challenging viewing for all but the most horror-hardened. That the killings were carried out by a group of men under the sway of ringleader John Bunting makes these events particularly noteworthy in psychological terms, and Shaun Grant's script focuses on Jamie Vlassakis, youngest and seemingly most malleable member of the quartet of perpetrators, to ponder what exactly would drive a seemingly ordinary teenager to participate in torture and murder.

Certainly there are no easy answers, and the film's bleak rendering of contaminated innocence sets it alongside other Australian offerings, including Rowan Woods's *The Boys* (1998) and David Michôd's *Animal Kingdom* (2010), in conjuring up a self-involved, self-justifying clan mentality in which conventional moral strictures no longer apply. The thesis here is that panic over the perceived threat of paedophilia in a working-class area of Adelaide allowed Bunting to create a position of influence for himself in a single-parent household lacking a father-figure, and then convince others to participate in the murderous enactment of his own neuroses. Victims included a gay transvestite, a drug user, a mentally challenged young man and an obese woman of below-average intelligence, as Bunting turned his own fear of the other and the marginalised into a trail of blood and suffering. He's an individual without humane empathy, perfectly caught in Daniel Henshall's performance, which chillingly flicks from scoutmasterish blockiness to unflinching malignance. Kurzel shows sound instincts in keeping much of Bunting's excesses off-screen, lest the enveloping horror overwhelm the film's intention of making us reflect on the killings and test our own moral responses.

Henshall is the only professional actor in the film (the rest of the cast were largely drawn from the area where the events unfolded – Kurzel himself is a local boy), and his potent presence effectively plays off against Lucas Pittaway's believable hesitancy as Jamie, whose response to the escalating horror is the crux of the movie. From a distance, one might dismiss the desire for violent vengeance against a perceived paedophile menace as the unfortunate product of too much tabloid hysteria, yet the facts here are that Jamie and his brothers were preyed on by a neighbour, and Jamie himself



The apprentice: Lucas Pittaway, Daniel Henshall

was effectively raped by his half-brother Troy. That places his dilemma over whether to fall in with the charismatic Bunting or shop him to the authorities in a wholly more complex context. When Troy is captured and battered to a bloody mess by Bunting, the latter forces Jamie to take a stand, one way or the other; here Kurzel adopts the high-risk strategy of prolonging the depiction of Troy's sufferings, as the powerless victim is repeatedly semi-asphyxiated with a cord and a tyre-lever so that Bunting can dare Jamie to enter the fray and finish him off. The duration of the sequence makes it extremely distressing to watch, yet it also pushes the viewer into the same moral corner as Jamie, since master manipulator Bunting presents the

crossing-the-line decision to kill as a kind of compassion to end the victim's suffering.

Throughout Kurzel sustains a mood that's both oppressive and contemplative. The magic-hour cinematography, washed-out colour palette, cutaways to evocative still-life urban detritus, the droning undertow on the soundtrack – these are by now fairly familiar aesthetic devices, but they serve their purpose to telling effect. This is a well-made, truly sobering film, likely to leave the viewer feeling washed-out and deeply sad: that we should feel anything at all, however, is a sign we've still held on to more of our humanity than those whose awful exploits we've just been exposed to. **Trevor Johnston**

CREDITS

Producers

Anna McLeish
Sarah Shaw

Written by

Shaun Grant

Story

Shaun Grant

Director

Justin Kurzel

Inspired by the books

Killing for Pleasure by

Debi Marshall and *The*

Snowtown Murders

by Andrew McGarry

Cinematography

Adam Arkapaw

Editor

Veronica Jenet

Production Designer

Fiona Crombie

Costume Designers

Alice Babidge

Fiona Crombie

Composer

Jed Kurzel

Sound Designer

Frank Lipson

©Screen Australia,
Warp Films Australia Pty
Ltd, Film Victoria, South
Australian Film
Corporation, Adelaide
Film Festival and
Omnilab Media Pty Ltd
**Production
Companies**
Screen Australia and
Warp Films Australia
present in association
with Film Victoria, South
Australian Film
Corporation, Adelaide
Film Festival and
Omnilab Media
Developed with the
assistance of Madman
Entertainment
Financed in association
with Fulcrum Media
Finance
Produced in association
Omnilab Media
Produced with the

financial assistance of
the Adelaide Film
Festival
Financed with the
assistance of the South
Australian Film
Corporation
Developed and
produced with the
assistance of Film
Victoria
Principal Investor:
Australian Government,
Screen Australia
Executive Producers
Robin Gutch
Mark Herbert

CAST

Lucas Pittaway
Jamie
Daniel Henshall
John Bunting
Louise Harris
Elizabeth
Anthony Groves
Troy

Aaron Viergever
Robert
David Walker
Mark
Bob Adriaens
Gavin
Frank Cwertriak
Jeffrey
Matthew Howard
Nicholas
Marcus Howard
Alex
Richard Green
Barry
Beau Gosling
David

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Revolver Entertainment

Sound It Out

United Kingdom 2011

Director: Jeanie Finlay

In the opening shots of *Sound It Out*, a steel triceratops stalks the faded industrial landscape, stomping the edgelands of cold chimneys and redundant factories. This is Stockton-on-Tees, an impoverished town hanging on the shoulder of Middlesbrough in County Durham. Director Jeanie Finlay grew up here, and her film commemorates *Sound It Out*, a small but voluminously stocked record shop which, in its own field, is also a dinosaur, a lumbering survivor in the age of streamlined, predatory 21st-century entertainment retail.

Herself a music fan, Finlay specialises in what you might call 'subcult confessional' documentaries, such as BBC Four's *Teenland* (2007) and IFC's *Goth Cruise* (2008). Here she points her (occasionally shaky) camera at *Sound It Out*'s manager Tom Butchart and his colleagues Stephen Laybourne and sister Kelly, and simply waits to see who'll drift through the door.

At first we get a succession of still lives from around the shop: the clutter of flyers, posters, stacks of CDs, and the jokey handwritten notes attached to each price tag, the personal touch of the indie store. If there's one myth *Sound It Out* convincingly busts, it's the one about specialist record shops being intimidating, elitist citadels of taste and female no-go areas. What's remarkable, in fact, given the often obscure and edgy music glimpsed on the racks, is the bewildering diversity of customers, who range from teenage Metal fans to emphysemic pensioners, from fanatical completists to the bloke who's just heard Dire Straits' 'Sultans of Swing' in the pub over the road and wants the greatest-hits CD.

High-street retail executives would choke on their croissants to see Tom's chaotic back room, clogged up with unpriced stock, customers' reserved 'bags' and slow-shifting units, but this is precisely what adds value to such an establishment, along with the memorious finesse that allows him to produce any requested item from the shelves like a conjuror. "There's an HMV, but we don't really count them as record shops," says Tom, a music enthusiast who nevertheless appears free of the consuming passions of some of his clientele, including the teenage Slayer fan who claims his record collection has saved him from suicide, or the Status Quo nut who intends to be buried in a coffin moulded from melted-down vinyl.

Sound It Out seems to enjoy a staid and comfortable existence; we're never told about the state of its finances or whether it's experienced a downturn. The implications and emotional resonance of an in-store concert by Saint Saviour, a Stockton woman who left to make a modestly successful singing career in London, is left unexamined. With no commentary, the level of discourse remains fairly cool, and there's little of the all-guns-



I like your stylus: 'Sound It Out'

blazing attack on the high street you might expect, though Finlay does show Stockton's boarded-up shopfronts and miserable pound stores as local colour, while several youths speak of the crushing lack of opportunity in the region.

A similar (American) elegy to the indie record store, Brendan Toller's *I Need That Record!* (2008), moved relentlessly towards the void created when the shop he'd been documenting was eventually forced to close thanks to a rent hike. There's no such narrative here, and neither are we informed of *Sound It Out*'s subsequent fortunes. A recurring theme is the shop as conduit for an eternal stream of music ("Record collections are never finished," observes a regular who runs a £100-a-month tab). As David says, casting his eyes over the racks of records, from tried-and-tested classics to mayfly dance fads like the local happy hardcore variant 'makino': "All this work is never-ending." By the end, Tom is portrayed as a kind of neighbourhood demiurge, lurking in his cavernous shrine, curating these idolatrous artefacts with which he feeds his appellants, needy for the music that will satisfy their own private desires.

Rob Young

CREDITS

Produced by

Jeanie Finlay

Edited by

Jeanie Finlay

Editor

Barbara Zosel

Sound Re-recording

Mixer

Pip Norton

©Glimmer Films

Production

Companies

Glimmer Films in

association with
Sideshow present a film
by Jeanie Finlay
Supported by Arts
Council England
Executive Producers
Dunstan Bruce

In Colour

Distributor

Verve Pictures Ltd

SYNOPSIS A documentary about *Sound It Out* Records, the last surviving independent record shop in Teesside, north-east England. Tom Butchart, employees David and Kelly Laybourne and various customers discuss the shop's merits and the importance of music in their lives, and to their community.

Straw Dogs

USA 2011

Director: Rod Lurie

Certificate 18 109m 33s

In transposing Sam Peckinpah's repellent 1971 anti-classic from a world of bloodlusting West Country yokels to that of bloodlusting rednecks in the Deep South, former film critic Rod Lurie has opened up the story to a polemical commentary on the cultural disconnect between Red State-Blue State values in contemporary America. A cerebral, liberal, atheist Harvard graduate who drives a Jaguar and offers a credit card to the bartender who serves him a light beer, David Sumner is anathema to the crude, boozy, white-trash labourers (or layabouts) in his wife Amy's rural Mississippi hometown, especially her God-fearing, pickup-truck-driving beefcake ex-boyfriend Charlie and the bellicose vigilante Tom Heddon (James Woods, relishing this role, conjures up the spectre of the Klan). Writing in the *New York Times*, A.O. Scott suggested that the film is a political allegory that could "find a cult following among frustrated Democrats going into the next electoral cycle". Given the setting, with its history of racial prejudice, this allegory would have resonated more powerfully had a black actor been cast as David, as Andrea Arnold cast James Howson to play Heathcliff in her racially charged *Wuthering Heights* adaptation. Instead, the burden of racism is carried by a tangential character, Laz Alonso's black cop, an Iraq war veteran whose cold-blooded murder by Heddon reveals the shallowness of the latter's sentimental patriotism.

As might be expected, three decades' worth of ultra-violent horror movies has diluted the impact of a *Straw Dogs* remake, but Lurie has in any case sanitised the material, especially the double rape. Whereas Susan George's Amy was made by Peckinpah to seem like she was 'asking for it', Kate Bosworth's characterisation panders only mildly to sexist fantasies, except for some innocuous bra-less scenes and the atrocious dumb-blonde detail that she's learning chess strategy so that she can beat her intellectually superior husband. Crucially, there is no ambivalence about Amy's volition in Charlie's rape of her. Unwittingly approaching orgasm, George's Amy seemed to urge Charlie to continue; Bosworth's Amy, in contrast, paws defensively at Charlie's body. Nor is there any implication that the second rape of Bosworth's Amy is anal (as was the case with George) since it takes place off screen. This doesn't make the rape any less horrendous or gratuitous than in the original film. Neither Amy tells her husband that she has been violated, so the incident fails to advance the storyline – except, perhaps, in prompting Amy to play her part in the subsequent massacre. Otherwise, she is a sacrificial pawn.

The taint of misogyny lingers then, marring a frequently amusing and fluently visualised update of a taboo



Roughhouse: James Marsden, Kate Bosworth

film. It might be argued, in any case, that Charlie is the film's object of desire, not Amy. The masculine conflict between David and Charlie has a distinct homoerotic charge – lingering shots of Charlie draw attention to his well-developed pecs and biceps. When David nervously climbs a ladder to speak to Charlie, the latter is shown from an extreme low angle that emphasises his physical dominance over the smaller, softer man. Lurie takes pains, however, to show that Charlie, unlike his friends, is not without a soupçon of erudition – he wears a University of Tennessee T-shirt, knows when the Battle of Stalingrad ended and recognises Beethoven's music. David, of course, acquires Charlie's less admirable traits by releasing his inner savage – he

is pumped with almost sexual pride after his first killing. Towards the end, he loses his glasses, a talisman of effiteness. He thus becomes 'blind' while fighting and killing Amy's virile, proprietary first lover: all love triangles lead to Oedipus.

Thirty-eight years after its release, Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs* refuses to go away. It was not only a spiteful slap at feminism, contemptuously delivered at the height of the movement's second wave, but an indulgent celebration of a civilised man's capacity for troglodyte regression, one so brilliantly crafted it's lost none of its perverse power. Lurie's bowdlerised version is more than competent and its sociopolitical twang is entertaining, but it won't last.

► Graham Fuller

CREDITS

Produced by
Marc Frydman
Screenplay
Rod Lurie
Based on the ABC motion picture screenplay by David Zelag Goodman and Sam Peckinpah
Based on the novel *The Siege of Trencher's Farm* by Gordon Williams
Director of Photography
Alik Sakharov
Editor
Sarah Boyd, A.C.E.

Production Designer
Tony Fanning
Music
Larry Groupé
Production Mixer
Steve C. Aaron
Costume Designer
Lynn Falconer
Stunt Co-ordinator
Mic Rodgers

©Screen Gems, Inc.
Production Companies
Screen Gems presents a Battleplan production
Executive Producers
Beau Marks
Gilbert Dumontet

CAST

James Marsden
David Sumner
Kate Bosworth
Amy Sumner
Alexander Skarsgård
Charlie
Dominic Purcell
Jeremy Niles
Rhys Coiro
Norman
Billy Lush
Chris
Laz Alonso
John Burke
Will Holland
Janice Heddon
Walton Goggins
Daniel Niles

Anson Mount
Coach Milken
Drew Powell
Bic
Kristin Shaw
Abby
James Woods
Tom Heddon

Dolby Digital/DTS/ SDDS
Colour by
DeLuxe
[2.35:1]

9.859 ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS Mississippi, the present. David and Amy Sumner arrive in the small town where Amy was raised to begin their married life in her late father's house. David is a Hollywood screenwriter working on a script about the Battle of Stalingrad, Amy a television actress. At a local bar, David is distressed by the violent antics of drunken football coach Tom Heddon, and the closeness of Amy and her ex-boyfriend Charlie, a onetime star quarterback now working as a building contractor. David hires Charlie and his crew to repair the roof of the barn opposite the house. They blatantly ogle Amy and work only a few hours each day. Though incensed when one of the workers walks into the house uninvited to get a beer, David asks them to fix a bear trap to the living-room wall. Charlie tells David that Amy still desires him and upbraids him for walking out of church during the Sunday sermon. When David accompanies Charlie's men on a deer hunt, Charlie and one of his men rape Amy; she doesn't tell David. During the Friday night football game, Heddon's teenage cheerleader daughter comes on to Jeremy Niles, a retarded man who unintentionally strangles her. Escaping the scene, Niles is hit by David's car. David brings him home. Heddon and Charlie, vowing revenge on Niles, besiege the house. Policeman John Burke intervenes but is shot in the back by Heddon. David, driven to defending his property, kills Heddon and two of Charlie's men; Amy shoots another. When Charlie threatens Amy, David kills him with the bear trap.

Tabloid

USA 2010

Director: Errol Morris

There are some things we think we know – or knew – about director and documentarian Errol Morris and his methods. His early films, *Gates of Heaven* (1978) and *Vernon, Florida* (1981), showed his crowning respect, if withheld credulity, for the absurdities falling from the mouths of those involved in pet cemeteries in California or growing sand in backwater Florida. His war films *Mr Death* (1999), *The Fog of War* (2003) and *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008), on the Second World War, Vietnam and Iraq respectively, are profound and incisive essays on 'false history' – or would be, if they didn't at the same time reveal the limits of the interrogative approach in docu-journalism, placing great emphasis on the barrister/advocate skills, competence and authority of the filmmaker himself. His finest film, *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) – which helped secure the release of convicted murderer Randall Adams – was not only a testament to his philosophical acuity, reconstructional ingenuity and cinematic originality, but also suggested the idea that, in cases of contested truth, cinema itself might constitute some sort of court of appeal, placing us the audience in the (perhaps unenviable) position of responsible jury.

It is these factors that make the new film so intriguing. At first encounter *Tabloid* can seem the most inconsequential of Morris's work, dealing as it does with the apparently self-deluded testimony of former Miss Wyoming Joyce McKinney, who in 1977 found herself at the heart of a tabloid storm after allegedly abducting Mormon missionary Kirk Anderson and holding him captive in a Devon cottage. Peter Tory, former *Daily Express* columnist and an otherwise sympathetic and gentlemanly interviewee, describes McKinney as "crazy, eccentric, self-obsessed, self-involved, manipulative and barking mad". Certainly Morris's (very infrequently heard) questions betray a man in almost jocular mood, and the few fey, tabloid-style or tongue-in-cheek photographic and cinematic inserts he utilises appear edited to produce gently mocking counterpoint and effect.

Likewise, in allowing McKinney's in-studio interview to dominate the film's running time and by eschewing most, if not all, of the contextualising and re-enactment techniques he has developed over his career, Morris may lay himself open to criticism of wallowing in the sheer comic absurdity, curious eccentricity and sleazy spectacle of his subject's incredible story. You could say that if Morris was looking for a victim able and willing to condemn herself out of her own mouth, with little need for extra corroboration, then he could have picked no better candidate than Joyce McKinney, whose obfuscation of her seedy past, tendency to self exposure and ridiculously

inflated levels of self-esteem make her a perfectly unreliable (and cinematically communicative) witness.

But *Tabloid*, despite these initial impressions, is not a film about exposure or ridicule. At a time when the damned ethics of tabloid journalism are themselves in the news, the film's depiction of the 'war of pictures' at the time between the *Daily Express*, *Mirror* and *Sun* newspapers is instructive, and the director subtly if undemonstratively makes the effects of the media frenzy around McKinney plain (McKinney, it is suggested, tried to commit suicide in the *Express*'s Strand offices). "You learn when you're famous who your friends are," she says. On the evidence here, her friends were few, and even they betrayed her. Footage near the end of the film shows her living in isolation, still protesting her undying love for Anderson, still "an incurable romantic". Her tears when describing the death of her dog Boogie are clearly deeply heartfelt and her elation movingly evident when she succeeds in having the poor animal 'brought back to her' by a Korean geneticist's cloning operation. Who's to say that those emotions are absurd? Certainly not the director of *Gates of Heaven*.

In fact, Morris here seems to come full circle, except now perhaps a little sadder and wiser and with his incredulity diminished sufficiently to dignify his subject as no mere mad self-deluder but, like us all, a poor victim of our own crazy notions of love, loyalty and idealism. *Tabloid* may not be Errol Morris's greatest film but now we know his simple senses of wonder and sympathy are still gracefully intact.

♦♦ Wally Hammond

CREDITS

Producers

Julie Bilson Aihlberg
Mark Lipson

Director of Photography

Robert Chappell

Editor

Grant Surmi

Production Designer

Steve Hardie

Composer

John Kusiak

Production Sound Mixer

Bruce Perlman

Production Companies

Airloom Enterprises and
Moxie Pictures present
a film by Errol Morris

A Sundance Selects and
Showtime Networks
presentation

Executive Producers

Robert Fernandez

Errol Morris

Angus Wall

Film Extracts

Brief Encounter (1945)

Brother Sun, Sister

Moon (1972)

Caged (1950)

The Godmakers I

(1982)

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Dogwoof Pictures

SYNOPSIS A documentary about former Miss Wyoming Joyce McKinney, who in 1977 was at the centre of the 'Manacled Mormon' tabloid scandal. Kinney travelled from the US to Ewell, Surrey, to kidnap her onetime fiancé, a Mormon missionary named Kirk Anderson, and take him to a Devon cottage in order to 'de-programme' him by means of special food and bondage sex. On 19 September 1977, McKinney was arrested for false imprisonment. She served three months in Holloway Prison before jumping bail and flying back to the US via Canada. McKinney, now in her sixties, is interviewed at length about the events and their aftermath.

Take Shelter

USA 2011

Director: Jeff Nichols

A sort of *Twister* for grown-ups, *Take Shelter* is about an Ohio working man who tries to protect his family from the portents of stormy apocalypse in his head. Writer-director Jeff Nichols says he began writing it in the summer of 2008 – when America was first fixing for the possibility of economic breakdown (to say nothing of manmade climate chaos), palliated by the uplift of the Obama presidential election campaign. "I had a nagging feeling that the world at large was heading for harder times," Nichols writes in the press notes. Three years later, the film he has made is right on the nose: *Take Shelter* effortlessly and unnervingly segues between – or even conflates – the commonplaces of household penny-stretching, the projections of an unsettled mind and the planet's capacity for massive, biblical retribution and rearrangement.

It's worth underlining that of these currents of contemporary experience, Hollywood tends to take a rather abstracted interest only in the last – with occasional pat homilies to the exoticness of the mentally ill. Then again, Michael Shannon's upper-blue-collar family man Curtis LaForche is hardly a conventional economists' fantasia of a rational self-interested agent; seen from the outside, he does his utmost to undermine the old-fashioned, homely success that his friend and colleague Dewart (Shea Whigham) identifies at the outset of the film ("You got it good"). But one of the film's accomplishments is that it doesn't view him from the outside; as Curtis sets about dismantling his home – banishing the dog, alienating friends, taking a high-risk loan to extend the family's storm shelter, abusing the job whose health insurance will pay for his deaf daughter's medical expenses – we've shared his visceral hallucinations of end-of-days rain, tornadoes, strange clouds of birds, assaults, abductions and flying furniture. "Is anyone seeing this?" he asks, having stopped on the side of the road before a huge electrical storm, and it's a question that resonates with the less represented crises of money and morale that isolate struggling people throughout the capitalist world.

Curtis's responses to his visions and fears – including his refusal to share them with his wife Samantha – may be more or less idiosyncratic but we also hear and then see what's driving them: the dread of inheriting his mother's schizophrenia. (She abandoned him in the back of a car when he was ten, he tells a psychiatrist, and he was found a week later eating trash out of a dumpster.) "I promised myself I would never leave, and I'm doing everything I can to make that true," he finally spills to his wife, though his offer to imprison his family in the storm shelter certainly qualifies as the opposite extreme. Shannon's own imprisoned-bear performance – diffident, furrow-browed, tight-wound, freighted with



Out of harm's way: Michael Shannon

dreadful options – gives the man a vital enigmatic quality, sympathetic and infuriating. Jessica Chastain's Samantha gets less subjective screen time but the mix of warmth, strength and vulnerability she brings to the part – along with her approachable flame-haired beauty – make it clear why she currently seems to be every casting director's favourite. The film grows into a compelling portrait of marital teamwork and its stresses.

If anything, *Take Shelter* – Nichols's second feature following 2007's lower-budget *Shotgun Stories* – grows more convincing as it develops Curtis's predicament. It's baldly shot on digital video with some crisply stylised visual

effects (including an eddying bird formation) given extra audio welly through the sub-woofers. Some of the narrative devices – the repeated nightmare reveals, a social-dinner eruption – come with a certain overfamiliarity (though they're executed with conviction), and the finale is almost too willful in its talking-point ambiguity. But it's a pleasure and a relief to see a film about the realities as well as the surrealities of the world, one interested in the sub-surface feeling of ordinary lives under pressure, and one with the boldness to visualise a familiar, prevalent metaphor and run for the hills with it.

♦♦ Nick Bradshaw

CREDITS

Produced by

Tyler Davidson

Sophia Lin

Written by

Jeff Nichols

Director of Photography

Adam Stone

Editor

Parke Gregg

Production Designer

Chad Keith

Music

David Wingo

Sound Mixer

Ryan Putz

Costume Designer

Karen Malecki

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LLC

Production Companies

Hydraulic

Entertainment, Rei

Capital and Grove Hill

Productions present a

Strange Matter Films

production

Produced in co-

operation with the

Screen Actors Guild

Made possible in part

with the support from

the Sundance

Institute/Annenberg

Feature Film Fellowship

Executive Producers

Sarah Green

Sarah Kavanaugh-Jones

Colin Strause

Greg Strause

Richard Rothfield

Chris Perot

Christos V.

Konstantakopoulos

Kathy Baker

Sarah

Ray McKinnon

Kyle

LisaGay Hamilton

Kendra

Robert Longstreet

Jim

This Our Still Life

United Kingdom 2011
 Director: Andrew Kötting
 Certificate U 58m 54s

This Our Still Life is our Film Of The Month and is reviewed on page 52.



Home in the hills: Eden Kötting

CREDITS

By
 Andrew Kötting
 Music
 Scanner

©Andrew Kötting
 Production
 Companies
 With thanks to Screen
 Archive South East,
 Bognor Regis Film
 Society, UCA @
 Maidstone

WITH

Leila McMillan
 Eden Kötting

Voices
 Alex Rodgers
 Claudia Barton

Distributor
 British Film Institute
 5,301 ft +0 frames
 Onscreen title
 Louvre This Our Still
 Life

SYNOPSIS A portrait of a remote, tumbledown Pyrenean farmhouse where the filmmaker Andrew Kötting has lived, on and off, over 20 years, with his wife and daughter. The film evokes a way of life, elementary and rudimentary, at odds with the contemporary world. Home-movie intimacies afford insights into the minutiae of their existence. Music for the film was composed by Robin Rimbaud, aka Scanner. As the years drift by, the roots put down through repeated visits to this remote locale become active and potent.



Out of touché: Matthew Macfadyen, Logan Lerman, Ray Stevenson, Luke Evans

The Three Musketeers

Germany/France/United Kingdom/USA 2011
 Director: Paul W.S. Anderson
 Certificate 12A 110m 19s

The first 3D adaptation of *The Three Musketeers* begins in Venice a year prior to the main action, with Milla Jovovich's schemer Milady de Winter thieving Leonardo da Vinci's designs for a flying machine from the Doge's Palace. Not held back by her flamboyantly wire-ruffed period garb, she dodges spiked balls in the booby-trapped vault like a Baroque-era Lara Croft. It's a part you won't find in the novel by Alexandre Dumas, and warns of what's to come in a version that has as much in common with director Paul W.S. Anderson's past videogame adaptations (he made 1995's *Mortal Kombat*) as it does with the 19th-century adventure classic.

The plot-skeleton of the Dumas story does soon become recognisable as young d'Artagnan (Logan Lerman) joins musketeers Aramis, Porthos and Athos on a mission to retrieve the Queen of France's stolen jewellery and foil a warmongering scheme – or “prevent the coming apocalypse” as this outrageously hyperbolic film describes it. Of course, fidelity to the book isn't everything, especially as Richard Lester's 1973 version already stands as a soundly acted, close adaptation. Anderson makes half-hearted stabs at the saucy wit that buoyed up Lester's take, but in an era less attuned to bawdiness (and minus Raquel Welch's particular talents), he relies instead on effects as the main hook. The result is a migraine-inducing, cacophonous assault, as elements from disparate genres are carelessly crowded together with a ‘more is more’ ethos – slow-motion martial-arts choreography teamed with pirate gangplanks

and views over Paris as the final battle takes to the skies.

No more nuance is required of Jovovich here than in Anderson's *Resident Evil* action-horror movies; the film is so lost in a din of spectacle that even villain-par-excellence Christoph Waltz is neutralised as conniving Cardinal Richelieu. Ironically for a film lauding Renaissance-man inventiveness, even the 3D is naively rendered, with figures striding into shot with no other purpose than to draw attention to a capability that's no longer even new. With no lulls in the brash, gaudy onslaught, *The Three Musketeers* ends less with a climax than a build-up of stimuli fatigue – and as if that weren't already too much, a clearly impending sequel.

✶ Carmen Gray

CREDITS

Produced by
 Jeremy Bolt
 Paul W.S. Anderson
 Robert Kulzer
 Screenplay
 Alex Litvak
 Andrew Davies
 Based upon the novel by
 Alexandre Dumas
 Directory of
 Photography
 Glen MacPherson

Editor
 Alexander Berner
 Production Designer
 Paul Denham
 Austerberry
 Music
 Paul Haslinger
 Supervising Sound
 Editor
 Stefan Busch
 Costume Designer
 Pierre-Yves Gayraud

©Constantin Film
 Produktion GmbH, NEF
 Productions S.A.S. and
 New Legacy LTD.
 Production
 Companies
 Summit Entertainment,
 Constantin Film present
 a Constantin Film,
 Impact Pictures
 production
 A film by Paul W.S.
 Anderson
 In co-production with
 NEF Productions, New
 Legacy Film and
 Babelsberg Film
 Supported by
 Deutscher
 Filmförderfonds,
 Filmförderfonds
 Bayern, Bayerischer
 Bankenfonds,
 Filmförderungsanstalt,
 Medienboard Berlin
 Brandenburg
 Executive Producer
 Martin Moszkowicz

Mads Mikkelsen
 Rochefort
 Gabriella Wilde
 Constance
 James Corden
 Planchet
 Juno Temple
 Queen
 Freddie Fox
 Louis
 Til Schweiger
 Cagliostro
 Orlando Bloom
 Duke of Buckingham
 Christoph Waltz
 Cardinal Richelieu

Dolby Digital
 In Colour
 [2.35:1]

Some screenings
 presented in 3D

Distributor
 E1 Films
 9,928ft +8 frames

CAST

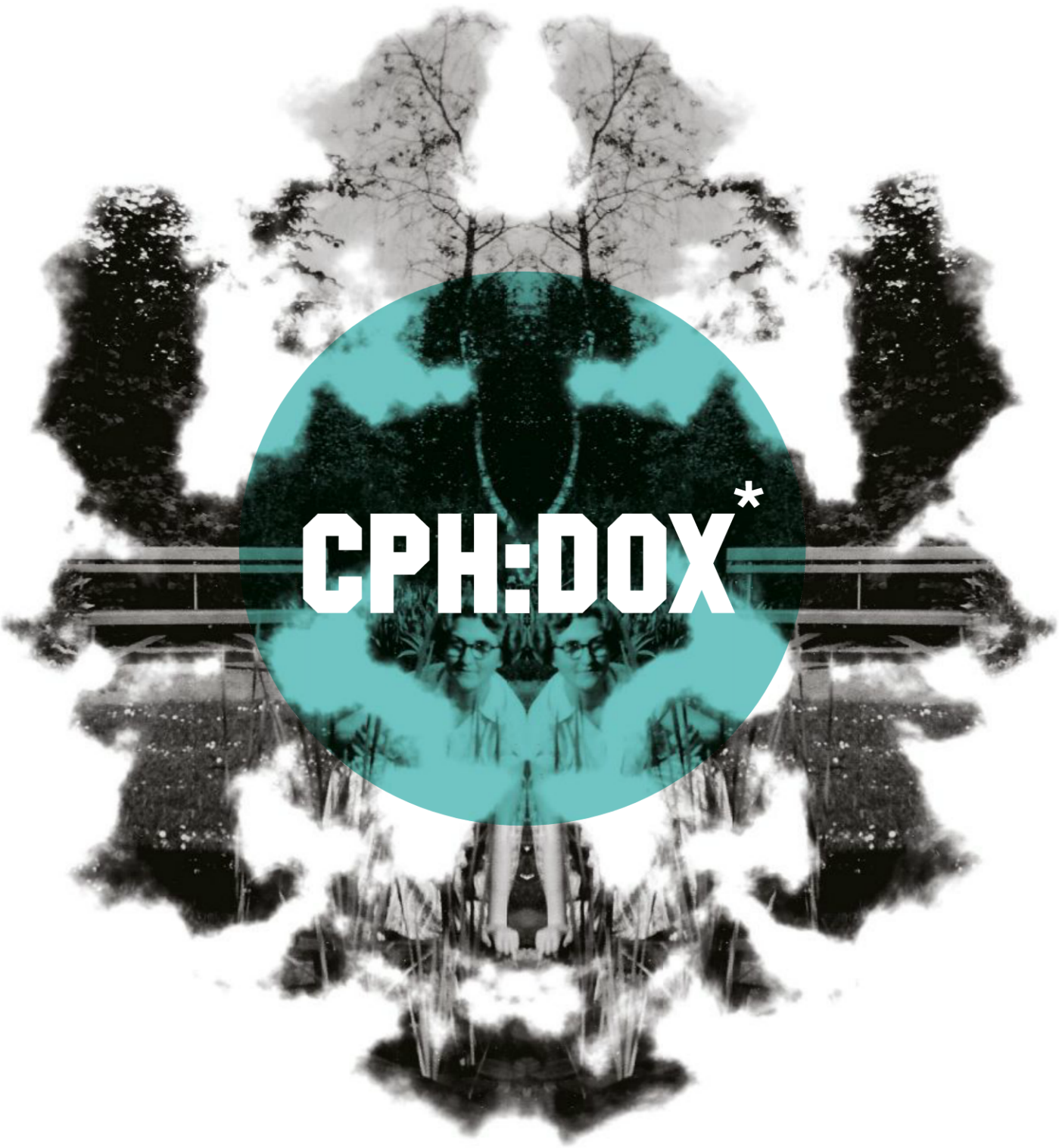
Logan Lerman
 D'Artagnan
 Milla Jovovich
 Milady de Winter
 Matthew Macfadyen
 Athos
 Ray Stevenson
 Porthos
 Luke Evans
 Aramis

SYNOPSIS Seventeenth-century Venice. Leonardo da Vinci's airship designs are stolen from the Doge's Palace by musketeers Athos, Porthos and Aramis and their accomplice Milady de Winter. Milady double-crosses the musketeers, delivering the plans to the Duke of Buckingham.

One year later, young d'Artagnan journeys to Paris with dreams of becoming a musketeer. He finds Athos, Porthos and Aramis disillusioned in the service of the naive, newly crowned King Louis. Milady embarks on a plot with the treacherous Cardinal Richelieu, stealing the queen's diamond necklace to plant in Buckingham's quarters and so prompt war with England by falsely suggesting that the queen has been unfaithful. Realising that the jewellery is missing, the queen suspects betrayal. Determined to prove his love for her lady-in-waiting Constance, d'Artagnan joins the musketeers on a mission to retrieve the necklace from the Tower of London before its absence can be discovered by the king, who has requested it be worn at a ball. Attempting to escape, Milady is cornered by former lover Athos, and plunges into the sea. An airship battle culminates in a swordfight on the roof of Notre Dame Cathedral and victory for the musketeers. D'Artagnan is made a musketeer. Buckingham, having fished Milady out of the ocean, heads towards France with fleets of airships, seeking revenge.

LOOK OUT FOR THIS YEARS

No. **9**



CPH:DOX*

3 - 13 NOVEMBER 2011

COPENHAGEN INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL

D OF
Det Obelske Familiefond

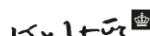
POLITIKEN
den levende avis

DR

IFILM
DET DANSKE FILMINSTITUT

 THE ISAK DINESEN
FOUNDATION
mifonden.dk

 KØBENHAVNS KOMMUNE

 KULTUR
MINISTERIET



Conversation pieces: Tom Cullen, Chris New

Weekend

United Kingdom 2011
Director: Andrew Haigh
Certificate 18 96m 43s

Filed in some of the same Nottingham settings featured in Karel Reisz's kitchen-sink classic *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), Andrew Haigh's wonderful second feature takes place during a single weekend in the city. Tired, Russell (Tom Cullen) excuses himself from his straight friends' polite party one Friday evening but detours to a nightclub on his way home, where he picks up Glen (Chris New), an opinionated young artist. What begins as a one-night stand deepens over the course of a lazy Saturday and Sunday, as the pair lounge around in bed, walk the streets or talk long into the night, buoyed by a little drink, cocaine and the ingenious ease that comes with mutual attraction.

At times reminiscent of Richard Linklater's talky two-handers *Before Sunrise* (1995) and *Before Sunset* (2004), Haigh's film is at once more credible and more intimate. In place of the Linklater films' high-sounding verbiage, the conversation between Russell and Glen feels less affected, ranging widely but tied always to the couple's exploration of their burgeoning affinity, each testing the waters of the other's sensibility. Self-assured, outspoken and frank about his sexuality, Glen pulls out a tape recorder during their first morning in bed to quiz Russell about their night together for an 'art project'. Putting their shared physical intimacy into words visibly unnerves Russell, who – while ostensibly out of the closet – is more reserved, and careful to whom he reveals his gayness. For Glen, such discretion is tantamount to walking on eggshells, being wary of causing offence to a straight world that accepts homosexuality only as long as it isn't confronted with the icky reality. For Russell, however, the affairs of the heart are not a political battleground.

Nor, perhaps, are they for Haigh. Where his first feature, *Greek Pete* (2009),

was a documentary about male escorts in London, *Weekend* is a move away from the potential ghetto of gay-themed cinema on to the universal terrain of desire, hope and disappointment. The result utterly convinces as a portrait of the first days of a new relationship, Haigh working wonders with long, crisply framed takes and two astonishingly sincere and nuanced performances. This is a film full of idle, languid moments, which are transformed by the context into instances of discovery, revelations of personality. One sequence finds the lovers chatting in bed after sex, when Glen pretends to be Russell's father in order to enact a 'coming out' scene that Russell – who was fostered as a child – has never been able to realise. It's a charming, generous piece of wish-fulfilment, the threatening

sweetness undercut by the perversity of this 'father-son' encounter occurring between the sheets.

Only Glen's imminent departure for a new life in the US, which forces the relationship to flower over 48 hours, smacks of familiar movie dramatics, occasioning a will-he-won't-he-get-on-the-train finale that edges towards the clichés of romantic comedy. But Haigh steers clear of an easy-option resolution, and when Russell overcomes his guardedness about displaying his affections publicly to kiss Glen on the platform, the instant is punctuated by a perfectly timed catcall. *Weekend* is finally a deeply romantic film, assured of the pleasure that one person can find in another, but rooted in the quirks and textures of contemporary British life.

♦♦ Samuel Wigley

CREDITS

Produced by
Tristan Goligher
Written by
Andrew Haigh
Director of
Photography
Ula Pontikos
Edited by
Andrew Haigh
Production Designer
Sarah Finlay
Sound
Tim Barker

©Glendale Picture
Company
Production
Companies

A Glendale Picture
Company with The
Bureau Film Company
In co-production with
Synchronicity Films
In association with EM
Media
Co-financed by EM
Media, supported by the
East Midlands
Development Agency
Developed with financial
assistance from the
Creative Scotland
National Agency Lottery
Fund
Developed in
association with EM
Media
Supported by the

National Lottery
through the UK Film
Council
Executive Producers
Anna Seifert-Speck
Suzanne Alizart

CAST

Tom Cullen
Russell
Chris New
Glen
Jonathan Race
Jamie
Laura Freeman
Jill
Loretto Murray
Cathy
Jonathan Wright

Johnny
Sarah Churm
Helen
Vauxhall Jermaine
Damien
Joe Doherty
Justin
Kieran Hardcastle
Sam

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Peccadillo Pictures Ltd

8,704 ft +8 frames

We Were Here

USA 2011
Director: David Weissman

"You never knew where the bomb was going to drop..." "None of my friends are around from the beginning..." The war analogies with which *We Were Here* begins are arresting and, it becomes clear, apt. A documentary about the Aids crisis that all but decimated San Francisco's queer community over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, the film uses a conspicuously limited form – talking-head interviews with five people who lived in the city throughout the period, backed up with well-selected archive material – to relate a specifically localised story of seismic oppositional trauma whose consequences and scars remain tender.

Producer-director David Weissman and editor/co-director Bill Weber previously collaborated on the 2002 documentary *The Cockettes*, about the pioneering alt-drag troupe – another, albeit more celebratory, film about shifts in gay San Francisco life. Chronologically, *We Were Here* picks up where that story ended, in the mid-1970s, recalled by some here as a halcyon period in which sexual liberation and social cohesion went hand in hand (visiting the bathhouse was known as 'going to church'). By the turn of the 1980s, so-called 'gay cancer' was blighting the idyll; up to half of San Francisco's gay men were estimated to have contracted HIV and for many the deterioration to terminal Aids was swift and terrifying. The city was at the forefront of medical and activist responses to the global crisis but federal authorities were hesitant when not homophobic, and the near-equivalence of HIV and death would be disrupted only with the development of combination therapy in the mid-1990s. By then, more than 15,500 San Franciscans had died.

We Were Here renders this grand-scale calamity wrenchingly personal through its judicious selection of its subjects and their nuanced, unflinching memories. Guy Clark was a florist in the Castro, the heart of the city's gay scene; Paul Boneberg was a political activist whose attentions turned from legal and civil rights to the fallout of a medical disaster; Daniel Goldstein was a designer who helped coordinate artistic responses; Eileen Glutzer was a nurse who began working on a groundbreaking Aids unit; and Ed Wolf was a carer with the same unit. The personal is indivisible from the public: the interviewees are near or in tears as they recall their experiences, and the rawness of their emotions is sometimes hard to watch.

The most moving details have a macabre specificity. Clark notes that he "can't even count the funerals" for which he supplied flowers. Glutzer found herself looking into the eyes of a patient she had grown to love following their removal from his body post-mortem. Goldstein describes how his partner, an immunologist, secured them places on an early anti-HIV drug trial



Putting on a brave face: 'We Were Here'

whose side effects led Goldstein to quit; all the remaining test subjects, including his partner, died. There are plenty of funny moments too, and inspiring recollections of a community rallying and personal benefits. Wolf, for instance, had felt out of place in eroticised 1970s San Francisco ("I was terrible at anonymous sex") but now found his more tender mien had its uses. "In many ways I began to thrive," he recalls. "It was like being in the army."

That military metaphor again. For all the good humour and resilience on show, there's no avoiding the fact that this was, in Goldstein's word, an "avalanche" of death. Weissman and Weber's film draws out the almost surreal nature of the crisis, in which whole groups of friends and even siblings were suddenly sick then dead. As powerful as the aspects it flags up – such as the ways in which the crisis helped straights to respect gays and gays to respect lesbians – are the aspects left inevitably blank. Can those who are still here ever really come to terms with their experience? And what if those who aren't still here were?

♦♦ Ben Walters

CREDITS

Co-director
Bill Weber
Produced by
David Weissman
Director of Photography
Marsha Kahm
Editor
Bill Weber
Music
Holcombe Waller
Location Sound
Lauretta Molitor

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Production Companies
Major funding provided by California Council for the Humanities/The Skirball Foundation, Silva Watson Moonwalk Fund, Wallace Alexander Gerbode

Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, Bay Area Documentary Fund, The Small Change Foundation

In Colour
[L78:1]

Distributor
Peccadillo Pictures Ltd

SYNOPSIS A documentary revisiting the Aids crisis as it affected San Francisco between the late 1970s and the late 1990s, constructed around interviews with five people who lived in the city throughout that period: activist Paul Boneberg, florist Guy Clark, nurse Eileen Glutzer, artist and designer Daniel Goldstein and carer Ed Wolf.



Ex maniac: Anna Faris

What's Your Number?

USA 2011

Director: Mark Mylod

Certificate 15 106m 4s

Watching the romantic comedy *What's Your Number?*, starring Anna Faris as a ditsy peroxide blonde looking to get hitched, you'd think the sexual revolution never happened. For a woman to have had 13 lovers qualifies as slutty behaviour; 20 puts her beyond the pale. Ally Darling becomes obsessed with this figure after reading a bogus sociological study by the aptly named Dr Helen Fig, which claims that, "In America, 96 per cent of women who have been with 20 or more lovers can't find a husband." At nearly twice the national average (a conservative 10.5), Ally vows not to raise her number any further. This leaves her little choice, in her quest for husband material, but to try to rekindle some of her old flames.

Much of the plot, based on Karyn Bosnak's 2006 novel *20 Times a Lady*, hinges on this half-baked premise. Ally strikes a deal with Colin (Chris Evans), her charismatic neighbour from across the hall, who sets out to help her track down every single one of her exes in exchange for temporary shelter from the one-night stands he wants to escape from the morning after (Colin's personal score makes Ally's positively pale in comparison). There is definitely some chemistry between the leads, fuelled by a great deal of exposed flesh – even before the sexy basketball striptease sequence that starts off in the Boston Garden and culminates with the two plunging butt naked into the city harbour. The occasional glimpse of Boston that the film affords makes the city appear rather twee (the shot of elderly women hanging up their washing in a sunny courtyard, though a

nice touch, looks more like Naples) but it's a change from more obvious film locations.

What's Your Number? has all the trappings of a romantic comedy, down to the cheesy pop soundtrack that goes some way to explain the film's curiously dated feel, for all its allusions to Facebook and Twitter. A subplot about Ally's sister's wedding, which draws inevitable comparisons with the recent *Bridesmaids*, yields its fair share of cringeworthy sentimentality, alleviated in some measure by fine performances from Ari Graynor as Ally's perfect sister

Daisy and from Blythe Danner and Ed Begley Jr as her divorced and equally stereotypical parents. Anna Faris's comedic talents are somewhat wasted on an uneven script, jointly written by Gabrielle Allan and Jennifer Crittenden. If many of the jokes elicit a chuckle from the audience, just as many fall flat and overly rely on crude language or testing the limits of political correctness. That said, you could only be disappointed if you came in with high expectations. As light relief, it's perfectly serviceable.

♦♦ Agnieszka Gratzka

CREDITS

Produced by
Beau Flynn
Tripp Vinson
Screenplay
Gabrielle Allan
Jennifer Crittenden
Based on the book *20 Times a Lady* by Karyn Bosnak
Director of Photography
J. Michael Muro
Film Editor
Julie Monroe
Production Designer
Jon Billington
Music
Aaron Zigman
Production Sound

Mixer
David J. Schwartz
Costume Designer
Amy Westcott

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Production Companies
Regency Enterprises presents a New Regency/Contrafilm production
Executive Producers
Arnon Milchan
Anna Faris
Nan Morales

CAST

Anna Faris
Ally Darling
Chris Evans
Colin Shea
Ari Graynor
Daisy Darling
Dave Annable
Jake Adams
Joel McHale
Roger, the boss
Ed Begley Jr
Mr Darling
Blythe Danner
Ava Darling
Heather Burns
Eileen
Eliza Coupe
Sheila
Kate Simses
Katie

Tika Sumpter
Jamie
Zackary Quinto
boyfriend Rick

Dolby Digital/DTS
In Colour
[L85:1]

Distributor
20th Century Fox International (UK)

9,546 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS Boston, the present. Thirtysomething Ally Darling is fired from her marketing job and dumped by her latest boyfriend on the eve of her sister Daisy's engagement party. After reading a study in a magazine suggesting that 96 per cent of women who have had 20 or more lovers can't find a husband, Ally concludes that her chances of ever marrying are slim if she ventures beyond her present score of 19 lovers. However, she soon ends up in bed with her ex-boss following a drunken spree. She decides to revisit her romantic past in the hope that her ex-boyfriends have improved with time.

Assisting Ally in her quest is her womanising neighbour Colin, an underemployed musician who is clearly attracted to her himself. Via the internet Colin tracks down Ally's ex-lovers, including a puppeteer, a gynaecologist, a magician doubling as bartender, a gay Republican politician, a prim-and-proper Brit and, lastly, wealthy philanthropist Jake Adams, who ticks all the right boxes and has Ally's snobbish mother in raptures. A jealous Colin fails to alert Ally when Jake returns from Africa; when she finds out, her budding romance with Colin stalls. Ally takes Jake to Daisy's wedding in place of Colin – though she soon comes to regret this. She realises Colin is the one for her.



Less is moor: Shannon Beer

Wuthering Heights

United Kingdom 2011

Director: Andrea Arnold

Certificate 15 128m 46s

Emily Brontë's famous novel is rugged terrain that's been tramped enthusiastically by film adapters as various as silent director A.V. Bramble (no prints of his 1920 version are known to survive, sadly), Luis Buñuel and Jacques Rivette, its most famous incarnation being William Wyler's 1939 Hollywood romance. It's even been transplanted to California as an MTV teen musical, and has appeared as numerous period TV adaptations. Yet Andrea Arnold's stark, defiantly naturalistic new version succeeds brilliantly in injecting the shock of the new into this well-thumbed English classic.

Her rough, elemental reading of *Wuthering Heights*, replete with casual brutality, Ted Hughes-like scrutiny of wildlife both dead and alive and Heathcliff's sullen cries of "Fook off", will jolt audiences weaned on the romantic tropes of previous versions just as Brontë's uncouth beast of a book did its Victorian readers. Stripping away the literary, romantic and supernatural trappings, Arnold has substituted her signature social realism, gutting the gothic framework of the novel and recasting the story from Heathcliff's point of view from his arrival as an Afro-Caribbean runaway slave rescued in Liverpool and brought to a bleak Yorkshire hill farm. The only things embraced wholeheartedly from her source beyond its dark central obsession are the harsh yet beautiful landscape and the relentlessly raw weather, which pass beyond 'pathetic fallacy' status thanks to Nicolas Becker's birdsong-flecked, wind-whipped

sound design to become almost characters in their own right.

There's an invigorating rather than incongruous whiff of predecessor *Fish Tank* (2009) in the weaving handheld camerawork, the use of taciturn non-professional actors and the portrayal of Heathcliff as the young, marginalised outsider whose wary, jealous eye cinematographer Robbie Ryan's camera adopts. Rather in the spirit of Cathy's famous cry of "I am Heathcliff," the sidling, spying glances through door cracks and greedy, languorous gazing at wild nature and wilder Cathy make Heathcliff's plight and hardships something deeply felt rather than stiffly observed. His race and class difference ("He ain't my brother, he's a nigger," snarls brutish heir Hindley) colours every exchange, fuelling newcomer Solomon Glave's mulishly blank-faced yet broodingly expressive performance. All the while the camera wraps around young Cathy and Heathcliff like a blanket, binding us into their stubborn, instinctual affection for one another as they play-fight on the moors, or Cathy delicately licks the blood off the whip-marks that he's earned by defying Hindley.

Wuthering Heights privileges its austere and gorgeous images heavily over speech, as part of the film's rejection of the literary template of most adaptations. While this suits the feral intensity of the childhood half of the narrative, it deprives us of the fierce gusts of confession that animate the novel, and contributes to a certain heavyhandedness in the lovers' reunion here. Denied the verbal duelling that made the recent *Jane Eyre* crackle or *Bright Star* (2009) shudder with suppressed longing, Cathy and Heathcliff flail sulkily at one another to signal mutual desire, and non-professional actor James Howson is reduced to skulking and scowling to convey the wretchedness of the adult Heathcliff. Since the film also bravely abjures the artificiality of a music

score, it can be an effort to connect with the characters' emotions, which seem highly coloured and choked-off simultaneously. A wraith-like Kay a Scodelario makes a brief, trembling mark as the rapidly ailing adult Cathy, but there's misery rather than chemistry in their groaning, clutching reconciliation. Passion is confined to a handful of arresting but perverse gestures – Heathcliff sinking his teeth into Isabella Linton's lip or fondling

Cathy's laid-out corpse with necrophiliac ardour. Nothing in the dawdling, overwrought second half can match the sensuous immersion of the childhood scenes, and frequent flashbacks to that rough-and-tumble idyll only highlight this disparity in emotional force. Just at the point when *Wuthering Heights* should be wringing your heart, you find it's merely wringing its hands instead.

♦♦ Kate Stables

CREDITS

Producers

Robert Bernstein
Douglas Rae
Kevin Loader

Screenplay

Andrea Arnold
Olivia Hetreed
Based on the novel by
Emily Brontë

Director of Photography

Robbie Ryan

Editor

Nicolas Chauderge
Production Designer
Helen Scott

Sound Designer

Nicolas Becker

Costume Designer

Steven Noble

©Wuthering Heights
Films Limited, Channel
Four Television

Corporation and the
British Film Institute

Production Companies

Film4 and the UK Film
Council present in
association with
Goldcrest Film
Production LLP and
Screen Yorkshire and
Hanway Films an
Ecosse Films
production
An Ecosse Films
production for Film4,
the UK Film Council,
Goldcrest Film
Production LLP and
Screen Yorkshire
Made with the support
of Screen Yorkshire
Production Fund
Developed with the
support of the MEDIA
Programme of the
European Union

Made with the support
of the National Lottery
through the UK Film
Council's Development
Fund and Premiere
Fund

Executive Producers

Tessa Ross
Mark Woolley
Tim Haslam
Hugo Heppell
Adam Kulick

CAST

Kaya Scodelario

older Cathy
James Howson
older Heathcliff
Solomon Glave
young Heathcliff
Shannon Beer
young Cathy
Steve Evets
Joseph

Oliver Milburn

Mr Linton
Paul Hilton
Mr Earnshaw
Simone Jackson
Nelly
Lee Shaw
Hindley
James Northcote
Edgar Linton
Amy Wren
Frances
Nichola Burley
Isabella Linton

Dolby Digital

In Colour
[1.33:1]

Distributor

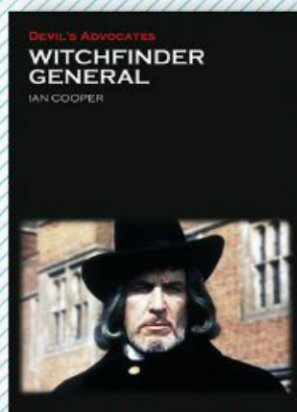
Artificial Eye Film
Company

11,589 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS Yorkshire, the early 1800s. Heathcliff, an orphan found in Liverpool, is brought back to a rough hill farm by Mr Earnshaw. He strikes up an obsessive friendship with Cathy, the young daughter of the house, but is hated by her brutish elder brother Hindley. When Mr Earnshaw dies, Hindley demotes Heathcliff to servant's work. Cathy is injured when she and Heathcliff spy on rich new neighbours the Lintons. She befriends young Edgar Linton while recuperating at his house. Heathcliff runs away from the farm after overhearing Cathy confess that Edgar has proposed to her – although she loves Heathcliff, she can't degrade herself by marrying him.

Returning as a well-off adult, Heathcliff rooms with the drunken Hindley and seeks out Cathy. She defies husband Edgar to spend time with Heathcliff, berating him for leaving her. Heathcliff seduces and carries off Edgar's sister Isabella, to hurt Cathy. Cathy, pregnant with Edgar's child, falls ill from the strain of her unrealisable love for Heathcliff and dies after confessing it to him. A distraught Heathcliff breaks into the house to caress Cathy's corpse, then digs up her coffin. Now the legal owner of the farm, he roams the moors tormented by memories of their childhood.

Read



Witchfinder General

By Ian Cooper, Auteur
'Devil's Advocates' series,
112pp, illustrated, paperback,
£9.99, ISBN 9781906733513

Witchfinder General occupies a unique place in British cinema, praised and vilified equally. For Mark Kermode it is the single most significant horror film produced in the UK in the 1960s, while for playwright Alan Bennett it was "the most persistently sadistic and rotten film I've ever seen". Undoubtedly a landmark, this in-depth study examines *Witchfinder General* as a horror film, a British film and an example of heritage cinema. There are a number of close textual analyses and an exploration of the various contexts that inform the film, from the creation of the X certificate and the tradition of Hammer Gothics, to its ongoing influence on horror cinema.

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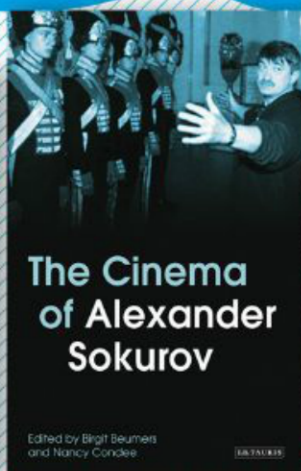


Let the Right One In

By Anne Billson, Auteur
'Devil's Advocates' series,
112pp, illustrated, paperback,
£9.99, ISBN 9781906733506

Vampires have never been so popular. Amid the glut, it takes a very special vampire movie to stand out. Like *Twilight*, the Swedish film *Let the Right One In* is a love story between a human and a vampire, but there the resemblance ends. Tomas Alfredson's film is not a romantic fantasy, but combines the supernatural with social realism. Acclaimed film critic and horror novelist Anne Billson looks at how it has drawn from – and wrung new twists on – such classics as *Nosferatu*, how vampire cinema has already flirted with social realism in films like *Martin* and *Near Dark*, and how vampire mythology adapts itself to the modern world.

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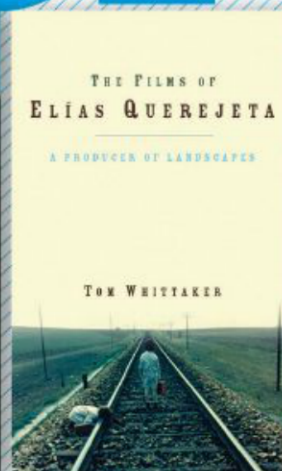


The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov

Edited by Birgit Beumers
and Nancy Condee, I.B. Tauris,
288pp, paperback, £16.99,
ISBN 9781848853430

Alexander Sokurov's *Russian Ark* is generally acclaimed as a milestone in cinematography. Yet this film is but one milestone in the work of this versatile director. Since the 1990s, Sokurov's films have had international recognition at film festivals and through foreign distribution. In this, the first English-language book to cover Sokurov's full oeuvre, leading scholars unravel his work on documentaries; his early films and literary adaptations; his trilogy on leaders focusing on the decaying body; his films on passing youth and approaching age; and, of course, *Russian Ark*.

www.ibtauris.com



The Films of Elías Querejeta: A Producer of Landscapes

By Dr Tom Whittaker,
University of Wales Press,
192pp, hardback, £85, ISBN
9780708324370, paperback,
£19.99, ISBN 9780708324387

This is the first book in English to explore the career of Spain's most important producer. Through their recurring emphasis on landscape, his films have documented a country in the grip of modernisation. In particular, this book investigates the ways in which landscape in his productions can be understood as a site of political struggle against Francoism and Spain's embrace of neoliberal capitalism. In bringing together both the importance of cinematic and spatial production, the book aims to make an original contribution not only to Film Studies, but also to Spanish Cultural Studies and Cultural Geography.



Hitchcock's Magic

By Neil Badmington,
University of Wales Press, 224pp,
illustrated, hardback, £75, ISBN
9780708323700, paperback,
£19.99, ISBN 9780708323694

Why are we drawn to the work of Alfred Hitchcock so long after his final film appeared? What is the source of Hitchcock's magic? This book answers these questions by focusing on the fabric of the films themselves – on the way in which they enlist and sustain our desire, holding our attention by constantly withholding something from us. Combining close analysis of a number of Hitchcock's most famous films with more general discussion of his work, the volume takes issue with the biographical and psychoanalytic approaches that have dominated studies of Hitchcock's films to argue instead for the significance of textuality.

Faces of evil

'Touch of Evil' has been described as the last film noir. More like the first last film noir, reckons Brad Stevens

Touch of Evil

Orson Welles; US 1958; Masters of Cinema/Region B; Certificate 12; 111/109/95 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1/1.37:1; Features: four audio commentaries (by Rick Schmidlin; Charlton Heston and Janet Leigh; James Naremore and Jonathan Rosenbaum; F.X. Feeney), trailer, 'Bringing Evil to Life', 'Evil Lost and Found', booklet

Given the amount of critical attention it continues to attract, film noir has proved peculiarly difficult to define, the only thing one might say with any confidence being that, to misquote Marlene Dietrich at the end of Orson Welles's *'Touch of Evil'*, it was "some kind of a genre". No American director would have claimed they were making a film noir in the 1940s or 1950s, the term being invented after the fact in order to link a group of movies that had a similar sensibility. According to François Truffaut, the name came about due to a misunderstanding: when *'The Southerner'* (1945) was first screened in France, journalist Henri Maignan described it as "un film de Jean Renoir" during a telephone conversation with his editor, who misheard this as "un film de genre noir".

Purists insist that the noir cycle starts with Boris Ingster's *'Stranger on the Third Floor'* (1940) and ends with *'Touch of Evil'* (1958). But it is entirely appropriate that this genre which never really was a genre should have an ending that was nothing of the sort. Welles's film might more accurately be called the first last film noir, distinguished examples of the genre continuing to be produced for more than two decades afterwards. Even Robert Altman's *'The Long Goodbye'* (1973), usually seen as an anti-noir, depended for its effect on the assumption that it was attacking something that still possessed contemporary relevance, having not yet become the property of ironists and academics. Ivan Passer's *'Cutter's Way'* (1981) seems to me the best candidate for the title of last film noir, with the following year's *'Blade Runner'* representing the birth of post- or neo-noir, in which the genre's tropes are revived self-consciously (though the latter tendency can be traced back to Dick Richards's 1975 Raymond Chandler adaptation *'Farewell, My Lovely'*).

'Touch of Evil' is an especially appropriate non-finale for a group of films chiefly concerned with the difficulty of defining borders between good and evil, hero and villain, cop and criminal, democracy and fascism, often insisting that these divisions are neither neat (good and evil being relative) nor



Heroes and villains: Orson Welles and Charlton Heston in *'Touch of Evil'*

straightforward (perhaps it is the cop rather than the criminal who is the true fascist). Welles's film interrogates this theme with particular ruthlessness, using its setting of a town on the border of Mexico (traditionally associated with lawlessness and rebellion) and the US (home of democracy and order) as a symbolic landscape in which the noir genre is treated to an apocalyptic summing-up (the sense of generic impurity being strengthened by several striking anticipations of Hitchcock's *'Psycho'*). Welles shoots and – to the extent that he controlled post-production – edits the film in a fragmented manner which suggests that the line between good cop Vargas (Charlton Heston) and bad cop Quinlan (Welles) is particularly thin, the obligatory attempt to restore normality at the conclusion being deliberately arbitrary.

So it is highly appropriate that the film itself should prove so textually unreliable, the initial 95-minute release version, which included a sequence reshot by Harry Keller, eventually being replaced by a 109-minute preview version that came to light in 1975. This longer print added some important footage directed by Welles, but included even more Keller material, and was in turn supplanted by a 1998 reconstruction which carried out a number of suggestions Welles made in a memo after watching Universal's cut, notably having the opening shot play without either credits (which now appear at the end) or Henry Mancini's music. This 111-minute variant also restores a small amount of footage that was present in the shorter general release print but missing from the longer preview version: it appears 15 minutes in, just after Vargas

The line between good cop and bad cop is particularly thin

chases the thug who's thrown acid at him, and consists of some dialogue between Vargas and Joseph Calleia's Sergeant Menzies ("Anything wrong, Vargas?" "No, I just couldn't catch him"). One of Keller's scenes has thankfully been cut, though the other – a romantic interlude in a car involving Charlton Heston, Janet Leigh, painfully obvious back-projection and some dialogue clearly not written by Welles ("Do you realise I haven't kissed you in over an hour?") – unfortunately remains.

Even the film's correct ratio is uncertain: Welles must have known that theatrical prints would be masked at 1.85:1, but there is plenty of onscreen evidence to suggest that he was composing for a 1.37:1 ratio (widescreen transfers frequently bisect the actors' heads). Masters of Cinema's new Blu-ray release commendably offers us all three versions, with the theatrical cut and the reconstruction viewable at either 1.85 or 1.37. The preview print is in 1.85 only (HD materials were unavailable), though many of us will have grown up watching precisely this version at 1.37, which is how it used to be shown by the BBC.

The variety of viewing options makes this two-disc set preferable to Universal's 50th anniversary edition Region 1 DVD, which was criticised for framing all three versions at 1.85 only, and the new high-definition transfers are razor-sharp. The lavish extras are taken from Universal's disc: four separate commentary tracks (including one with now deceased stars Heston and Leigh), a trailer that contains some takes not used in any cut of the film, and two short documentaries (which have 2008 copyright dates but consist entirely of footage from the 1999 documentary *'Reconstructing Evil'*). MoC's package also includes a 56-page booklet with essays by François Truffaut, André Bazin and Welles, as well as notes on the film's variant versions and ratios.

Ashes & Diamonds

Andrzej Wajda; Poland 1958; Arrow Academy/Region 0 DVD/Region-free Blu-ray Dual Format; Certificate 12; 103 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: filmed interview with Andrzej Wajda, booklet essays by Michael Brooke, Marek Hendrykowski and Andrzej Wajda

Film: After *A Generation* (1955) and *Kanal* (1957), the third in the trilogy that made Andrzej Wajda's name at home and abroad shows the director negotiating with consummate skill a transition in subject-matter from the ideologically safe ground of anti-Nazi resistance to the rather more contentious territory of the power vacuum at the end of WWII.

Set on the very final day of the conflict, this reworked adaptation of the already famed Jerzy Andrzejewski novel presents its central character, Zbigniew Cybulski's anti-Soviet partisan Maciek, as an ill-fated individual whose mission to assassinate a Party secretary makes them both victims of the tragic path of history. Or maybe instead he's a troubled hero whose resistance to the seemingly inevitable onset of Soviet control stands as an inspiration for the subsequent generation of Poles under political oppression? Astutely cagey scripting actually makes both readings tenable – one for the state censor, one for the Polish audience? – giving the film a slippery fascination highly redolent of its tensile era.

On the other hand, you can come to it without much in the way of prior knowledge (you don't need to have seen the other films in the trilogy, for instance) and still be wowed by a movie that resembles the Orson Welles-James Dean collaboration of your dreams. In thrall to *Citizen Kane* (as he says in the accompanying video interview), Wajda set out to play with deep focus, keep the ceilings in shot and conjure up a whole host of flamboyantly metaphorical images – flaming vodka glasses as a remembrance of the dead, a hanging crucifix indicating moral turmoil. Sometimes these venerable cinema classics from Eastern Europe can seem more like a duty than a pleasure, but not this one – it's canny, engrossing and ice-cool.

Disc: Those who contend that black-and-white shows off the subtlety of Blu-ray presentation even more than colour will be delighted by this striking brand-new restoration, which captures every nuance of cameraman Jerzy Wójcik's high-contrast lighting. A worthwhile interview with the now 85-year-old director usefully lays out the political background to the drama. (TJ)

The Cheerleaders/ Revenge of the Cheerleaders

Paul Glickler; US 1973/76; Arrow/Drome/Region 2; Certificate 18; 79/84 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: trailers, television and radio spots, reversible sleeve, booklet

Films: Paul Glickler's 1973 film *The Cheerleaders* was a drive-in hit, dropping the soap-opera and counterculture

elements of the cycle of 'hot girl profession' films begun by Stephanie Rothman's *The Student Nurses* in favour of formless, T&A-centric slapstick which the charitable might consider influenced by Robert Altman's *MASH*. Virgin Jeannie (the wonderfully named Stephanie Fondue) becomes a cheerleader and learns how to be a slut to help the home team. In the climax, after accidentally exhausting their own players with a pre-match orgy, the cheerleaders womanfully seduce the opposing side to set up a somnolent football game. The slapstick sex, perhaps influenced by the British *Confessions* series, is more awkward than funny, especially a lesbian session on an exercise bike which wouldn't pass health-and-safety regulations.

Richard Lerner's 1976 follow-up *Revenge of the Cheerleaders* is more achieved, and runs to semi-surreal comedy, actual cheerleading and choreography, with a Disney-style plot about an evil property developer out to close down the school, a vestigially progressive subtext (the squad has an ethnic mix) and notable work from cult stars such as the waiflike Cheryl 'Rainbeaux' Smith (a *vérité* final shot of Smith with her newborn baby is sweet and, with hindsight knowledge of her unhappy later life, heartbreaking) and David Hasselhoff, making his screen debut as the aptly named 'Boner'.

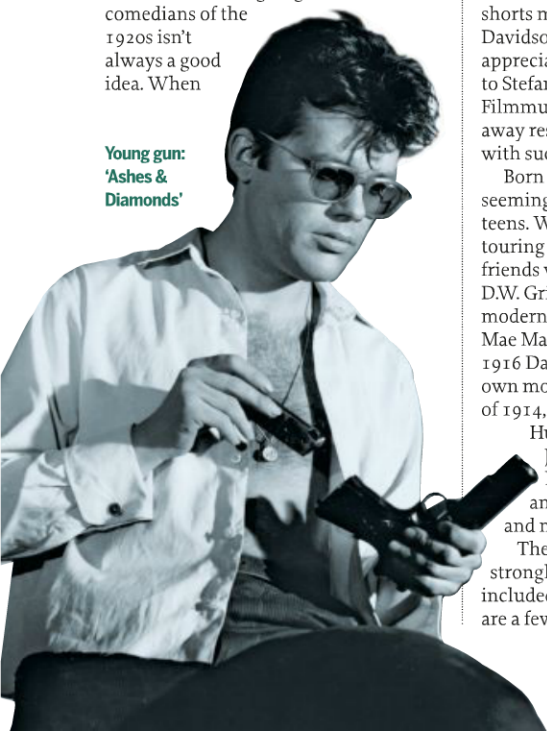
Disc: Extras – commentaries, stills, etc – from the US *Cheerleaders Collection* (which also includes Jack Hill's *The Swinging Cheerleaders*) aren't carried over. A booklet essay by Robin Bougie heavily stresses the author's masturbatory reminiscences. (KN)

Max Davidson Comedies

Leo McCarey; US 1927-31; Edition Filmmuseum/Region 0 PAL; 257 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.35:1. Features: ROM section with scripts, reviews and stills, booklet essays by Stefan Drössler, Stewart Tryster, Richard Bann and Steve Massa

Films: Resurrecting forgotten American comedians of the 1920s isn't always a good idea. When

Young gun:
'Ashes &
Diamonds'



Identification of a Woman While rarely mentioned in the same breath as Antonioni's benchmark 1960s output, it is a mesmerising, enigmatic work

the Pordenone Silent Film Festival dug up Lloyd Hamilton in 1991, the scraps of laughter mingled with the sounds of people making for the exit. However, when Pordenone presented a Max Davidson programme four years later, everyone stayed. Merry tears rolled down cheeks, notably during *Pass the Gravy* (1928), a two-reel epic about warring neighbours, newly engaged siblings and the prize rooster Brigham, accidentally cooked for the celebration feast.

In 1998 the film was inducted into the United States National Film Registry, official bower of films deemed 'culturally significant'. Davidson, long dead, and forgotten except by film collectors, would have been amazed. His contract with producer Hal Roach was terminated seven months after *Pass the Gravy* was released; ahead lay two mostly meagre decades of bit parts. With this two-disc set of his surviving shorts made for Roach between 1927-29, Davidson's humour can finally be appreciated worldwide. Applause goes to Stefan Drössler and colleagues at Filmmuseum München, who beavered away researching and restoring prints with such splendid results.

Born in Berlin in 1875, Davidson seemingly settled in the States in his teens. Working in rough-and-tumble touring theatre companies, he made friends with another young aspirant, D.W. Griffith, who put him into the modern story in *Intolerance* (he comforts Mae Marsh with a glass of beer). But by 1916 Davidson had already found his own movie niche. In Reliance comedies of 1914, he played the character Izzy Hupp, one from his long line of Jewish immigrants – bushy-haired tailors, pawnbrokers, rag-and-bone men, quick to gesticulate and never far from a derby hat.

The Jewish element persists strongly in the 13 Roach shorts included here, though the best (there are a few duds) would be distinctive

whatever the ethnic colouring. As a comedian, Davidson is more reactive than active – his principal tools are his face, hands and shoulders. He shrugs, strokes his chin, blinks and winces at the difficulties caused by others. Direction and camerawork are equally observational. Most films are directed or supervised by Leo McCarey, in his early years a genius at comic timing. Gags are played out patiently, sometimes into the camera's far distance. In the Roach manner, they are also meticulously squeezed until there's no juice left: *Pass the Gravy* (the pride of this set, along with *Don't Tell Everything*) is an object lesson in generating multiple laughs from a simple situation.

Kind laughs, too. Yes, Davidson's Jews appreciate money; yes, he plays a stereotype, long a part of the popular entertainments created for (and by) America's immigrant hordes since the mid-19th century. But the stereotype is served with a wink – a wink only widened in plots where Max's unassimilated European Jew is pitted against his Americanised offspring. While Max wears heavy frockcoats, his children sport racy pullovers, cloche hats and, if played by Spec O'Donnell, freckles. How could this kid with the corrugated wavy hair, hanging round doorways with a malevolent grin, ever be Max's son? That is part of the joke; and O'Donnell is only the most prominent of the supporting team who help make most of these films so funny.

Discs: The restored prints eloquently amalgamate bright 35mm images with dowdier but crucial material on 16mm. And the DVD presentation is immaculate. Those films in fragments come boosted with stills and details from scripts; films presumed entirely lost live on in script form in the extensive ROM feature. Musical accompaniments, mostly by Joachim Bärenz, Christian Roderburg and Günter A. Buchwald, never interfere and often

enhance. Max Davidson and Edition Filmmuseum have brought joy to the world. (GB)

Identification of a Woman

Michelangelo Antonioni; US 1982; Criterion Collection/Region 1 DVD/Region A Blu-ray; 130 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Film: After the peripatetic years of international auteurism beginning with 1966's *Blowup*, Michelangelo Antonioni returned to work in Italy in the 1980s. *Identification of a Woman* was the last feature he composed before the 1985 stroke that effectively muted him, and while rarely mentioned in the same breath as his benchmark 1960s output, it is a mesmerising, enigmatic work fully deserving the opportunity for reassessment afforded by a proper DVD release.

Tomas Milian stars as Niccolò, a glum middle-aged Roman film director preparing a new project, of which we learn almost nothing until *Identification's* beguiling final shot. Ostensibly searching for a leading lady, Niccolò carries on two affairs, first with Daniela Silverio's aristocratic Mavi (a situation complicated by the interference of – imagined? – spies paid for by a rich admirer of hers), the second with an actress, Ida, played by Christine Boisson.

From the opening, which has Niccolò crawling into his apartment to avoid an alarm system installed by his ex-wife, the film is loaded with images of trespass befitting its theme of sexual covetousness and anxiety. (That Milian was more familiar to Italian audiences from disreputable genre fare underscored the class barrier between Niccolò and Mavi.) Much character is conveyed through contorted, desperate, graphic scenes of lovemaking, animal physicality made simultaneously ethereal by an electronic score that includes John Foxx, Japan and Tangerine Dream. While dealing in the primordial, insoluble problems of male and female sexual identity, *Identification* sustains an air of gloomy enchantment through its elemental organising motifs, including visitations of water (a trip to the void of Venice's open lagoon), fire (a headline reads: "Scientists Say Expanding Sun Poses Threat to Earth's Future") and fog (a centrepiece scene with Niccolò and Mavi swallowed by milky mist on a highway drive).

Disc: Both the DVD and the Blu-Ray look good enough to shame a previous Mr Bongo release which was plagued by soundtrack hiss and clumsy subtitling. Carlo Di Palma's cinematography, including a number of dusk-lit shots, is revealed in its full splendour. (NP)

The Iron Horse

John Ford; US 1924; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region 0; 150 minutes (US version)/133 minutes (UK version); Certificate PG; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: two alternative versions, Tag Gallagher video essay, booklet

Film: John Ford would certainly make more nuanced films, but his rousing 1924 yarn about the construction of

NEW RELEASES

➤ America's first transcontinental railway and the obstacles in its path (technical challenges, financial chicanery, full-scale Indian assault) shows a thrilling mastery of both large-scale spectacle and underlying social detail. Abraham Lincoln may have greenlighted the project, but Ford never forgets the Irish and Chinese immigrants who actually built it, and they get almost as much screen time as George O'Brien's dashing hero.

This new DVD edition offers both US and UK release versions, which turn out to be strikingly different, thanks to each being sourced from one of two master negatives, created either from separate takes or the same take shot with a second camera. Ford's compatriots generally got the choicest cutting-room pickings: the US hunting sequence concludes with the buffalo stampeding right over the camera, while the UK equivalent is more cautiously circumspect. The US intertitles are more geographically and historically precise, while the UK print truncates the lengthy opening eulogy to Lincoln and adds a more parochial dedication to British railway pioneer George Stephenson.

Discs: The UK print is consistently pretty good for its age, whereas the US one ranges from significantly sharper to noticeably fuzzier, and generally exhibits more physical

damage. Both versions get the same full-blooded orchestral score (edited where appropriate) by Christopher Caliendo. A typically idiosyncratic video essay (including slowed and freeze-frame analyses) by Ford's biographer Tag Gallagher and a booklet reproducing original publicity materials round off a beautifully presented package. (MB)

Films by Grigori Kozintsev

Hamlet

USSR 1964; Mr Bongo Films/Region 0; Certificate U; 142 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1

King Lear

USSR 1970; Mr Bongo Films/Region 0; Certificate U; 132 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1

Films: Coincidentally, review copies of Grigori Kozintsev's *Hamlet* and *King Lear* arrived on the same day that London's Globe Theatre announced a season of all Shakespeare's plays in different languages, without surtitles, to emphasise the Bard's universality. So in tribute, the DVD subtitles were switched off – which ended up doing the films a favour. Stripped of the contentious accompaniment of Shakespeare's original text (Boris Pasternak's Russian translations are much more slangily colloquial than that fussily academic



Palace politics: 'Hamlet'

approach would suggest), it's easier to appreciate the way Kozintsev and his team have so thoroughly rethought the material as both Soviet-era political parables (Innokenti Smoktunovskiy's *Hamlet* is more a victim of Machiavellian machination than his own indecision; *King Lear* constantly demonstrates the fragility of the threads binding 'civilisation' together) and elementally physical drama. Elsinore Castle seems to have grown organically out of the raging sea below, while Yüri Yärvet's *Lear* regresses to the most primitive basics, in a landscape strewn with megalithic stones. Jonas Griksius's black-and-white Scope images and especially Dmitri Shostakovich's scores illuminate the text as eloquently as do any of the actors.

Discs: On an old-fashioned 4:3 television, Mr Bongo's non-anamorphic interlaced transfers look acceptable. But on a modern 16:9 set, the viewer has to choose between hefty black bars on all sides of the image, cropping the subtitles at the bottom or simply importing the already available Ruscico editions, which split each film across two discs but offer a conspicuously higher-resolution image without any fiddling. Krupniy Plan's more recent Russian DVDs are reputedly even better, but lack subtitles. (MB)

Landmarks of Early Soviet Film

The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks/By the Law/Stride, Soviet!/The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty/The House on Trubnaya/Old and New/Turksib/Salt for Svanetia

Lev Kuleshov/Lev Kuleshov/Dziga Vertov/Esfir Shub/Boris Barnet/Sergei Eisenstein/Viktor Turin/Mikhail Kalatozov; USSR 1924-30; Flicker Alley/Region 0 NTSC; 595 minutes total; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: new musical scores, 28-page booklet

Films: How to make a case for this saturation bath in Russian montage-invention esprit to anyone except the pedagogues and film-school acquirers already waiting for their pre-orders to arrive? Perhaps I talk too much; check

out that murderers' row of Soviet masters, represented either by rarities or still-under-the-radar masterworks, and the set becomes a delirious must-have, fascinating maybe most of all for the blanket portrait of the post-Kuleshov Cine-Lab zeitgeist rather than the usual focus on Eisenstein's particularity or the relative humanism of Pudovkin and Dovzhenko. These guys crewed on, and acted in, each other's ramshackle productions like crazy pre-New Wavers (*Mr. West* has Pudovkin as a discomfitingly toothless farce villain, though Boris Barnet, as a gun-totin' American cowboy riding a taxi down a Moscow thoroughfare and doing his own absurd stunts, steals the show), and the Politburo's diktats seemed merely like rules to accept and then work around, just like the Hollywood-populist strictures challenged filmmakers from the 1930s on.

Just one title – a Kalatozov! – should be enough to send the pulse racing. For too long represented in the West only by *The Cranes Are Flying* and *I Am Cuba* (if not the international swansong *The Red Tent*), Kalatozov had a 40-year career, and *Salt for Svanetia* is his seventh silent film and sixth documentary. It began as fiction, a drama called *The Blind*, shot in the Georgia highlands of the title, but the studio nixed it and forced Kalatozov to reshape it into an agitprop ballade about an isolated, primitive region plagued by ancient ways and eventually saved by the roads built by Soviet industriousness. But of course it's fiction all the same, re-enacted and constructed Robert Flaherty-style, and although Kalatozov doesn't yet have Sergei Urusevsky as his DP, the visuals are still ceaselessly wild and disarming. The Ushguli villages themselves look like sets for *The Lord of the Rings*, and a late scene in which a mother dribbles breast milk on to the soil of her dead baby's grave is hair-raising.

Eisenstein's *Old and New* should be familiar, if never this well preserved and presented, but Barnet's *The House on Trubnaya* is a startlingly ambivalent and subtle domestic comedy pitting ordinary Muscovite lives against the imposed social order, while Viktor

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Turin's remarkable documentary *Turksib* (also recently released on DVD and Blu-ray by the BFI) is a visually arresting piece of muscular exotica.

Kuleshov himself, nearly everyone's teacher at one point or another and montage's great 'effect' inventor, is also preserved here with both the ludicrous *Mr. West* and the Arctic-frontier masterpiece *By the Law*, which is as singularly undogmatic as it is – rather beautifully – faithful to the power of *mise en scène* over montage, from the wrenching burial-in-a-hurricane sequence (the arduous tactile effort of which influenced everyone from Kalatozov to Sokurov to Amos Gitai), to the vision of the hunter's tiny cabin stranded by infinite floodwaters, a last outpost prison of madness and murder.

Discs: The digital remasterings are all as pristine as video has ever been for these blasts from the past, and the accompanying booklet written by Ana Olenina and Maxim Pozdorovkin is a flat-out pleasure. (MA)

Mimic – The Director's Cut

Guillermo del Toro: US 1997; StudioCanal Region B Blu-ray; Certificate 15; 112 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1;

Features: video prologue with Guillermo del Toro, del Toro audio commentary, featurettes, deleted scenes, storyboard animatics, gag reel, theatrical trailer

Film: Guillermo del Toro's second feature and first 'Hollywood' film has been undervalued in his output, with general knowledge of his dissatisfaction with the finished product tending to limit his fans' appreciation of its genuine achievements. It may not be the film del Toro envisioned, but it's a stronger work than a play-nice assignment like *Blade II* (2002).

To end an insect-spread polio-like epidemic in New York, Frankensteinian entomologist Mira Sorvino gene-splices a new species ('the Judas Breed') to wipe out cockroaches. Their job done, these sterile bugs are supposed to become extinct, but instead they adapt, evolve and survive, gaining the ability to mimic the look of a homeless man in a long overcoat – and begin preying on the city's marginal people.

Disc: The remastered Blu-ray is an upgrade on any previous home-video issue of this movie, bearing out del Toro's gracious admission that the production and script problems which hurt *Mimic*'s story also spurred him on to more imaginative and audacious filmmaking. This looks and sounds astonishingly good for a 'big bug' movie. Extras are exemplary: a tactful yet biting commentary from del Toro, who recalls a revolving door of screenwriters (Matthew Robbins, John Sayles, Steven Soderbergh) and 'additional directors' (an Ole Bornedal scene remains, though Robert Rodriguez's 'second unit' stuff is dropped), the imposition of conventional or arbitrary elements (del Toro's mutant bark beetles became more obviously verminous cockroaches) and trims which have been restored in this cut (stressing the heroine's pregnancy and some religious



The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks

Vsevolod Pudovkin stars as a discomfitingly toothless farce villain

and/or evolutionary subtexts). Concise documentaries cover the making of this cut, the special effects and the insect theory. A few deleted scenes and del Toro's descriptions of several rejected endings further fill out the film. (KN)

The Modern City

Manhatta/Jeux des reflets et de la vitesse/Nuits électriques/Broadway by Light/Marseille Vieux Port/New York Portrait: Part 1/16x

Centre Pompidou/Region 2; 1921-87; Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand/Henri Chomette/Eugène Deslaw/William Klein/László Moholy-Nagy/Peter Hutton/Igor and Svetlana Kopystiansky; 70 minutes total; **Features:** essay

Films: This collection of seven short city symphonies made between 1921 and 1987 is an unusual example of imaginative compilation in the avant-garde film DVD market (where too often films are dryly assembled according to artist or period). It's far from an exhaustive sampling but the collection gives a solid overview of the 'city-film' genre, taking in styles from surrealism and constructivism to pop and minimalism. The majority of the films take the form of delirious, kaleidoscopic tours of the metropolis, but some are equally as wary of the urban condition.

Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler's *Manhatta* (1921), which has been described as the urtext of city portraits, opens the collection and provides the perfect balance between the two sentiments. Despite its scratched print, it's clear that its makers were dazzled by the spectacle of New York and alive to the potential that the new portable Debrie camera offered to capture it, often favouring dramatic, vertiginous rooftop viewpoints. But at its heart the film reveals a fundamentally splintered stance – one moment Strand and Sheeler's camera rests on ant-size

humans trapped in New York's heaving streets, the next it alights on the lyrical spectre of a breathing city, with a multitude of quieter moments focused on wafts of smoke drifting from chimneys towards the steel and iron horizon. (After completing *Manhatta*, Strand chose to film and photograph exclusively agrarian subjects, while an urban-entranced Sheeler stayed put in the city.)

Compositions of geometric shapes and oblique angles can be spied throughout *Manhatta* but the sense of the city pulling filmmakers towards abstraction is also keenly felt in two other films from the 1920s, Henri Chomette's playful, fragmented Parisian adventure *Jeux des reflets et de la vitesse*, and most delightfully in Eugène Deslaw's *Nuits électriques*, a giddy, firework-like spectacle crafted from a dancing nighttime skyline of street lamps and shop lights. Meanwhile, László Moholy-Nagy's 1929 *Marseille Vieux Port*, with its wandering camera documenting everyday harbour life, has much more of a *vérité* feel than you'd expect of the Bauhaus pioneer who would plunge headfirst into abstraction only one year later with his city-inspired *Lichtspiel* – although the scenes where the camera plunges down Marseille's transporter bridge do hint at what was to come.

The highlight of the collection is undoubtedly William Klein's 1958 film *Broadway by Light*. Klein returns to much the same territory as Deslaw, but focuses on fragments of Broadway's pulsating neon facades through much more of a Pop lens. The result is a colourful frenzy of flashing billboards, street signs and cinema hoardings accompanied by a hectic jazz soundtrack. Interestingly though, Klein keeps his camera trained on these giant advertisements even as the sun rises and the neon blitz ends,

recording a much more melancholic spectacle. "The first film I've seen in which colour was absolutely necessary," was Orson Welles's assessment.

Disc: Transfers are all adequate – the only shame is that the *Manhatta* print is the well-worn one from the Pompidou's collection rather than the print recently restored by a consortium of archives in Britain, the US and the Netherlands. A brief but insightful contextualising essay accompanies the disc. (IS)

Nightmare

Romano Scavolini: US 1981; Code Red DVD/Region 1; 98 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.78:1; **Features:** alternative transfers, Romano Scavolini interview, featurettes

Film: *Nightmare*'s refraining image is a blond child straddling a primal-scene bed, fire-axe in hand, the ice-cream-man whites he's wearing spackled with red, red gore.

Italian writer-director Romano Scavolini attained 'video nasty' infamy with the UK ban on this very sanguinary US-shot slasher, which stalks one George Tatum as he stalks others. Tatum is a schizophrenic tormented by nightmares of the above-mentioned image, who is released from an experimental clinic after years of therapy and starts to submerge himself anew in unwholesome influences. The film's first half-hour, following George's return to society, is its strongest, finding a balance between his stylised nightmares – daunting angles, barrel distortion, a (now restored) wetly red-and-white palette – and found locations uncannily evoking a disturbed psyche. Particularly striking is the use of an in-the-round peepshow stage where a stripper struts between windows that open and close on customer booths like some elaborate Pavlovian device.

Tatum's road-trip ends in Cocoa Beach, Florida, where he begins to haunt a single-mother household composed of pre-teen prankster CJ, his dullard siblings and their nervously exhausted mother. (A typical exchange: "Mommy, what happened?" "Shut up.") The family unit seems scarcely less dysfunctional than the lunatic. It's hard to say how much of this is intended, and how much is a result of the second-language tone-deafness accountable for the discordant performances, ranging from Baird Stafford's harrowing work as Tatum to Danny Ronan's wooden line-reading babysitter and John Watkins's government agent, presumably dubbed with a high-pitched voice and commanding an adrift procedural subplot that never reconnects to the main highway of the narrative. An obvious debt to *The Shining* peaks with a menacing low-angle hacking-through-the-door shot, but *Nightmare*'s tatty take on psychopathology is all its own.

Discs: Code Red has redressed the long absence of the full *Nightmare* (a previous UK DVD was truncated, and from inferior material) with decided overkill. Two discs include three transfers of the movie (disc two's 16x9 telecine is the best), an untranslated 95-minute interview with director

The big reveal

It stars Nico as a stripper and has music by Serge Gainsbourg, but 'Strip-Tease' isn't as edgy as you'd expect, finds **Tim Lucas**

Strip-Tease

Jacques Poitrenaud; France 1963; Mondo Macabro/Region 0; 96 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: production notes and brief history of striptease by Pete Tombs, video interviews with Nico biographer Richard Witts and friend Lutz Ulbrich

When Susanne Ofteringer's documentary 'Nico Icon' was released in 1995 it offered to many of the late singer's fans their first glimpse into her life as a model and actress before Andy Warhol's 'Chelsea Girls' (1968), before the historic 1967 album (recorded in 1966) she cut with the Velvet Underground, even before her Gordon Lightfoot-written debut single of 1965. The title of that single, 'I'm Not Saying', evidently reflected Nico's own attitude towards her early professional years; in a video interview included here, we have the testimony of a former lover, musician Lutz Ulbrich, that he was absolutely unaware she'd made another film immediately following her brief appearance in Fellini's 'La dolce vita' – much less that she had been the star of it. Likewise, Nico drew no one's attention to the fact that, three years prior to cutting her first known record, she had entered a recording studio to sing the theme song for this film, 'Strip-Tease', the third scored by the estimable Serge Gainsbourg. Nico's sexily dry, unusually tuneful singing debut – which, if retained, would frankly have been her best work in the picture – was ultimately bumped in favour of a version sung by Juliette Gréco, but the unreleased version was later dusted off for inclusion in a 2001 box-set of Gainsbourg's film music and can be found on YouTube.

And here, finally, is the film itself, never released theatrically outside France but now out on DVD in its entirety for the first time anywhere in the world. One would imagine that the popular interest in Nico, and Gainsbourg particularly, would have made this happen earlier, but there is a suggestion in the supplements that the film's producer Jules Borkon (Franju's 'Eyes Without a Face') or its director Jacques Poitrenaud may have actively suppressed it or held out for the right deal, which didn't materialise till now.

'Strip-Tease' is a bizarre artefact to be sure; it manages to be both much more and much less than we expect. Given its outlaw patrimony, with the original goth girl husbanded in art by the original mauvais garçon de chanson, one anticipates something at least nascently edgy or countercultural; however, this is a French film about a tradition of mature



The things she does to please: Nico in 'Strip-Tease'

entertainment, whose classy strip-club settings are free of the expected criminal element, making the movie almost wholesome in contrast to other films probing this corner of metropolitan nightlife. This despite quite a bit of purely titillating nudity, as various performers (Poupée La Rose, Nathalie, Cherry Liberty) from actual French venues – as well as Nico herself, reportedly only four months after giving birth to Alain Delon's alleged son – artfully peel themselves.

Billed as 'Krista Nico', the former Krista Päffgen plays Ariane, a German immigrant dancer whose blank eyes, queenly cheekbones and ever-pursed bee-stung lips crown a tall, shapely but flatfooted body: any shots of her ballet dancing quickly move in on her head and shoulders. While preparing to dance her first lead in a new production, Ariane is told by the director Pierre (Umberto Orsini, who also appeared in 'La dolce vita') that the show's investor wants her part for his girlfriend, and she stomps out in protest. She turns to an unlikely best friend – Sam (Joe Turner), an ageing stride pianist in a jazz club – for consolation, and symbolically leaves her dancing shoes behind after an equally clichéd sidewalk encounter with old friend Berthe (funny-voiced Dany Saval), who has found fame as an exotic dancer called 'Dodo Voluptuous'. We never see

'Strip-Tease' is a bizarre artefact to be sure... it manages to be both much more and much less than we expect

Dodo dance, much less strip, but in her strangely Cantonese-sounding French she recommends Ariane to Mr Paul (Darry Cowl), the manager at Le Crazy Club (akin to Paris's famous Le Crazy Horse Saloon), who, after witnessing her wooden, unsensual dancing, has the idea of having her strip in a novelty act with a marionette mirror image of herself.

The remainder of the film plays out with chick-flick predictability: Pierre, learning what Ariane is doing, pursues her sensing an easy lay but is soon set straight. She attracts a new admirer, Jean-Loup (Jean Sobieski, Leelee's fresh-faced father), the wealthiest and most eligible of French pretty-boy bachelors, who inundates her with flowers. After some resistance ("What does he think I am, a war memorial?") she dates the inveterate gift-giver – a hilarious montage includes them in matching hunters' outfits, shooting at grouse together – and accepts his proposal of marriage, until she realises his intention to shame his stuffy family into acceding his tapped-out trust fund even further by threatening to wed a stripper. In a well-publicised performance, with Jean-Loup enthroned in the middle of the front row, Ariane does her final strip, divesting herself of her gifted flowers, minks, brooches and baubles, which are dropped into the heel's lap to the ruinous merriment of all Paris.

Naively written and unexceptionally directed, 'Strip-Tease' is attractively shot in black-and-white and gains a great deal from Gainsbourg's inventive score. Mondo Macabro's 'stereo' disc (two-channel mono) offers pleasingly full-bodied presence for such a dated monophonic source. Fun discovery: the French way of saying "Break a leg!" is "Merde! Merde! Merde!"

NEW RELEASES

Scavolini, and additional featurettes including a visit with special-effects coordinator Edward French (whose work was erroneously, controversially, credited to Tom Savini) in what looks like a dingy storage room. (NP)

Our Beloved Month of August

Miguel Gomes; Portugal 2008; Second Run/Region 2; 144 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1 anamorphic; Features: short film ('Canticle of All Creatures'), trailer, booklet

Film: Coincidentally released on UK DVD shortly after Pedro Costa's *Colossal Youth*, Miguel Gomes's second feature could easily come across as a close companion-piece. Both films blend fiction with non-fiction and show a keen interest in Portugal's more marginalised communities (in this case the inhabitants of the rural region of Arganil), but Gomes has a disarmingly infectious sense of fun that's all his own. It's hard to know how to read the film at first, as seemingly unconnected vignettes (a fox invades a hen coop, an MOR band suffers a power-cut mid-song, an elderly woman watches herself being murdered on screen with gleeful fascination) are interspersed with Gomes himself negotiating the shape of his film with a producer concerned that nothing he's shot seems to resemble the phonebook-thick script and a sound recordist with his own aesthetic philosophy. It sounds wildly indulgent in synopsis, but it's completely coherent in practice, its various narrative and *vérité* strands almost imperceptibly intertwining and coalescing until everything from the puppy-love subplot between two cousins to the cheesy romantic songs that pepper the soundtrack (often performed on screen) slots perfectly and often movingly into place. **Disc:** The director-approved transfer is superb, and the supporting short, *Canticle of All Creatures*, is a wholly unpredictable delight, segueing convincingly from handheld troubadour-led tourism to stylised medieval parable to full-on anthropomorphic frenzy. The affectionate tone of the invaluable context-setting booklet essay by *S&S* deputy editor Kieron Corless suggests that the entire package was a labour of love. (MB)

The Outsiders

Francis Ford Coppola; 1983/2005 US; StudioCanal/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 2-DVD special edition; Certificate 12; 115 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.40:1; Features: introduction and new commentary by Francis Ford Coppola; commentary by cast, featurettes, readings from the novel, 'NBC News' segment, deleted scenes, trailer

Film: In the early 1980s, as troubled projects *Hammitt* and *One from the Heart* saw his American Zoetrope studio floundering, director/mogul Francis Ford Coppola turned to tried-and-tested source material in *The Black Stallion* and the work of million-selling S.E. Hinton, whose teen fiction was a fixture of high-

school reading lists. As the extras on these discs point out, it was actually a petition from the Lone Star High School in Fresno that set him on the road to adapting *The Outsiders*, for which he assembled a once-in-a-lifetime cast of tyro male Hollywood talent (on the basis of which you'd have bet on stardom for Messrs Howell and Macchio rather than also-ran Tom Cruise). Given the 1961 setting and generic story of class tension and adolescent rebellion, Coppola took the decision to shoot it in saturated colours with a lush orchestral score from his father Carmine, effectively reproducing the celluloid stylings of the late 1950s. Somehow that always seemed a good fit with the naive sentimentality of the storytelling, since these teary-eyed youths, who never utter a swear word and can't pass a burning orphanage without saving the stricken children inside, always seemed to inhabit their own make-believe universe.

Fast-forward to 2005, when Coppola, then in movie-career doldrums, sifted through his mailbag and the numerous requests from high-schoolers wishing to see more of the book on screen, went back to the edit suite and restored some 22 minutes to deliver what then became known as *The Outsiders: The Complete Novel* for the US home-video market. That's the version presented here, and while there's certainly a fuller sense of characterisation, the result is also a more prosaic, less distinctive offering. One understands his reasoning for ditching Coppola Snr's occasionally slushy score, but the succession of Elvis numbers replacing the orchestral strings just doesn't convey the hyper-emotionalism that is, after all, the point of the material. Impossible then, to turn a piece of artifice into a slice of social realism with a nip and a tuck, and thus hard to muster much enthusiasm for Coppola's second thoughts. As with *Apocalypse Now Redux* you do have to wonder whether he's really the best judge of his own achievements.

Discs: The Blu-ray disc was unavailable for review but no problems with the current DVD transfer. There's a raft of extras in both formats, and the actors assembled seem chuffed by the reinstated scenes in the longer 2005



The Outsiders Coppola's 2005 edit is a more prosaic offering. Impossible to turn a piece of artifice into a slice of social realism with a nip and a tuck

cut here making its UK debut. But why not go the whole hog, also give us the 1983 original and let the viewer decide if this is an improvement? Fortunately US, Swedish and South Korean editions are still around to let us make the comparison. (TJ)

The Phantom Carriage

Victor Sjöström; Sweden 1921; Criterion/Region 1 DVD/Region A Blu-Ray; 106 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: two new scores, commentaries, interview with Ingmar Bergman excerpted from 1981 documentary, video essay about the film's influence on Bergman by Peter Cowie, vintage making-of footage, essay by Paul Mayersberg

Film: A classic from the rise of Swedish cinema in the early 1920s, this Selma Lagerlöf-based morality tale might be Sjöström's greatest claim to fame before moving to Hollywood in 1924. Certainly it's a roiling, vivid piece of work which either heavily influenced the Germans of that decade or shared much of their post-war DNA in terms of visuals and

the Euro-fad for reconstituted folktales. The film begins in a gaslight nimbus, at the deathbed of a Salvation Army nurse (in Sweden, a *slumsyster*) who summons a local rumpot named Holm (Sjöström) to her side. Too drunk to answer the call, Holm eventually dies and is instantly met by the ghost of a drinking crony who died the previous year – since when he's been the cowed Angel of Death, and now it's Holm's turn. As the two ghosts survey the past and the future as it could have been, using Dickens, looking forward to Capra, and constructing a kind of Escher staircase of flashbacks and flashforwards, a path of iniquity and vice is spelled out in which Holm's brutish influence condemns his innocent brother and his own nuclear family. A harrowing late passage actively prophesies *The Shining* (1980), as Sjöström's drunk tyrant takes an axe to a locked door and his frazzled wife plans to poison herself and the children rather than live with him.

On the face of it a rather 19th-century diatribe against alcohol (a good deal of cosmic blame is placed on those who 'lead others astray' to booze and neglect their jobs and families), the movie is nonetheless electrifyingly realistic in terms of acting and nuance, while also being proudly expressionistic in its fantasy – as when, via double-exposure, the Grim Reaper parks his carriage in the ocean to retrieve a woman's soul left over from a shipwreck. All told it's a consistently gorgeous movie, with cinematography by Sweden's dominant eye, Julius Jaenzon, lighting the semi-transparent ghosts as carefully as the 'reality' and indulging in genuinely inspired imagery.

Disc: Restored recently by the Swedish Film Institute, the film is never less than beautiful, and the battery of extras are Criterion-standard fascinating,

connecting the film forwards in time to Bergman (a big fan). Paul Mayersberg's essay, though full of information, is fizz-less and questionable (categorising Murnau as one of the "fathers of *film noir*", superficially equating Holm's alcoholism with the vampirism in *Nosferatu*, etc.). (MA)

Le quattro volte

Michelangelo Frammartino; Italy 2010; New Wave Films/Region 2 DVD and Blu-ray; Certificate U; 88 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: interview with director, theatrical trailer

Film: Humanity gracefully cedes its place at the top of the film food chain in Michelangelo Frammartino's spare, unhurried but gloriously poetic essay, which celebrates the bond between man and nature by levelling its gaze with equal intensity on animal, vegetable and mineral too. In a Calabrian village, a dying goatherd, a baby goat, a ceremonial conifer and a charcoal pile serve their successive lifespans as the 'Four Turns' that Pythagoras believed dwelt in men to link them to their surroundings. It's the most watchful paean to the rural everyday since *The Tree of Wooden Clogs* (1978), and even that didn't give a featured role to the tree.

There's little plot, and no dialogue, but the film's close, exquisite observation of country life and landscape is compelling, and even comic in a marvellous eight-minute sequence in which a dog accidentally engineers a goat break-out. Steeped in an elegant, oblique mysticism, but without dipping into 'circle of life' sentimentality or the aestheticisation of rural poverty, it's a highly original contribution to the burgeoning Slow Cinema movement.

Disc: Though the film itself is discreet about its underlying philosophy, Frammartino is obligingly eloquent in a filmed interview about everything from the exploration of metempsychosis to the drawbacks of filming goats: "You have to wait. It's an exercise of humility of the eye." The transfer is appropriately luminous, allowing one to appreciate the wintry green hillsides and every speck of dust tumbling through the early-morning sunlight of an empty church. (KS)

Sounds and Silence: Travels with Manfred Eicher

Peter Guyer and Norbert Wiedmer; Switzerland 2009; ECM/Region 2 DVD/Region B Blu-ray/87 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9 (DVD anamorphic); Features: short promo film for Manu Katché's 'Playground', trailer

Film: A documentary on music producer Manfred Eicher and his influential label ECM, this starts with a shot of the man at his Munich headquarters, alone and deep in concentration as he listens to a disc of Keith Jarrett playing Gurdjieff's 'Reading of Sacred Books'. The sequence might strike those unfamiliar with the range of ECM's output as ominously ascetic, but the mood lightens almost



Winos and spirits: 'The Phantom Carriage'

NEW RELEASES

immediately as the film follows Eicher and/or a varied selection of musicians to locations as diverse as Tallinn, Tunis, Athens, Bergamo, Copenhagen and Saita. At a recording (in a church, of course) of a choral piece by Arvo Pärt, we not only have the Estonian composer (and his wife) wax lyrical about the producer's profound sensitivity, but see them perform an impromptu waltz together. And while Argentinian bandoneón maestro Dino Saluzzi, introducing German cellist Anja Lechner to compadres playing tango in a cantina, insists on the importance of folk music in his work, oud genius Anouar Brahem (composer of the music for Moufida Tlatli's films) can be seen at home composing a new piece with the help of a computer.

But the film is not merely proof of Eicher's refusal to accept the limits of generic 'borders' in music; it's also a revealing study of what a sympathetic, imaginative producer can bring to a recording or concert. Eleni Karaindrou, long the composer for Theo Angelopoulos's films, tells us that Eicher's passion always ensures he's 100 per cent devoted to whichever artist he's working with at any given time, and the film captures that splendidly as he works on a track with Nik Bärtsch's 'zen-funk' band Ronin.

Beautifully crafted in its own modest and impressionistic way (the road-movie sequences are even reminiscent of ECM's distinctive cover art), Guyer and Wiedmer's film impresses both as a revealing look at the processes of musical creativity and a portrait of one man's abiding passion for the miracles that music, in all its diversity, may give rise to. Small wonder Godard has placed his trust in Eicher's taste for the past two decades.

Disc: The film's lustrous images are well served by the transfer. The short promo film for a Manu Katché number is pleasing but unremarkable. (GA)

The Suicide Room

Jan Komasa; Poland 2011; ITI Home Video/Region 0; 111 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9 anamorphic; Features: production featurette, stills gallery

Film: One wouldn't expect a teen-angst melodrama to open with a concert recital of Schubert's 'Der Doppelgänger',



Voice Over Its despairing view of gender relations proves far more complex and intelligently contextualised than its controversial reputation suggests

still less that it would offer such astute psychological commentary on the downside of adopting online avatars, but Jan Komasa's debut is full of similar surprises. When a dare triggers a series of events leading to abject online humiliation, teenager Dominik seeks sanctuary in a virtual environment called the Suicide Room, which provides Samaritans-style support while stimulating an already nascent interest in the philosophy and practice of suicide. This comes to a head when Dominik develops a strictly virtual relationship with pink-haired Sylwia, self-immured in her bedroom for three years. These sequences are rendered in animation whose occasionally blocky digital artefacting emphasises their artificiality, the onscreen doppelgängers enjoying rich fantasy lives as their real ones fall apart. Komasa (himself young enough to get away with a Polanski cameo as a thug on a bus) said that he wanted to scare the bejesus out of his teenage target audience, and though he ultimately overdoes both the melodramatics and the cultural reference points, there's no faulting his ambition.

Disc: Both the transfer and the optional English subtitles are fine – albeit not extended to the Polish-only extras. (MB)

This Boy's Life

Michael Caton-Jones; US 1993; Second Sight/Region 2; Certificate TBC; 110 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1 anamorphic widescreen

Film: Adapted from Tobias Wolff's beastly-boyhood memoir but somewhat more lurid than his ruminative self-portrait, this high-class domestic melodrama swings uncertainly but enjoyably between coming-of-age tale and wicked-stepfather story. It winds up primarily a showcase for a pair of fine performances, particularly from Leonardo DiCaprio, who eloquently invests teen rebel Toby with bravado, self-loathing and furious misery, while Robert De Niro's bully and braggart stepfather tries to beat good character into him. Director Michael Caton-Jones leaves them ample space to clash antlers, so there's nuance as well as power in the performances, De Niro's Dwight flashing insecurities alongside his fists.

There's nothing subtle, however, about the film's fetish for 1950s detail (less plot-pertinent and thus less potent than *Scandal's* 1960s garnishes) as the camera pores lovingly over tail-finned cars, *Superman* on TV and Ellen Barkin's wiggle-tailored wardrobe and Marilyn Monroe hairdos, which get marginally more attention than her stoical, sidelined performance as Toby's mother. For all that, the film achieves nothing like the convincing whiff of time and place that De Niro's nostalgic rite-of-passage period piece *A Bronx Tale* cooked up in the same year. Still, screenwriter Robert Getchell, who explored similar stranded-single-mom terrain in *Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More* (1974), makes the dialogue in the film's plethora of fight scenes sing and sting, as mulish resentment and small-minded malice duke it out deftly.

Disc: A pretty and more than passable transfer, packaged without extras. (KS)

Voice Over

Christopher Monger; UK 1981; BFI/Region-free DVD and Blu-ray Dual Format; Certificate 15; 103/107 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: 'Repeater', booklet

Film: Christopher Monger's 1981 feature has been virtually invisible since its initial release caused a storm of feminist controversy. It's easy to see why it struck a nerve at a time when cinemas were swamped by undeniably misogynist slashers, but its despairing view of gender relations proves far more complex and intelligently contextualised than its reputation suggests.

Protagonist Fats Bannerman (a rivetingly self-loathing Ian McNeice) is a writer and radio presenter who's only truly happy when he escapes his grotty bedsit into the Regency romance that he broadcasts to a surprisingly eager audience. But when multiple illusions are shattered within hours, he undergoes a full-scale breakdown, exacerbated by the sudden introduction of a mute, severely traumatised woman into his private life. Often misused in films, the anguished harmonies of Schubert's 'Death and the Maiden' quartet seem like the soundtrack that Fats himself would choose to underscore his mental and moral disintegration.

Disc: This minuscule-budget 16mm production has rough edges that are impossible to hide, but the cinematographer-approved high-definition transfer resolves every last grainy detail of the only remaining complete copy. The main extra is Monger's feature debut *Repeater* (1979), a self-conscious genre experiment with plenty of ideas but lacking an actor as strong as McNeice to hold it together (though Monger can't be blamed for the now-distracting casting of Alexei Sayle in a straight supporting role). BFI Flipside booklets are always good value, and this collection of new and contemporary critical pieces and reminiscences by Monger and his collaborators is particularly strong. (MB)

Films from Zoetrope Studios

The Escape Artist

Caleb Deschanel; US 1982; StudioCanal/Region 2; Certificate PG; 90 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

One from the Heart

Francis Ford Coppola; US 1982; StudioCanal/Region 2; Certificate 12; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

Film: Zoetrope was Francis Ford Coppola's bold, quixotic attempt to create a United Artists-style dream studio, free from the demands of Hollywood. Talent was to be foregrounded and front-office accountants kept at bay; people like Michael Powell and Sam Fuller were visitors and consultants. Although the name survives, the company endured severe financial problems throughout the 1980s – but at least the films it produced were often magical. Caleb Deschanel's *The Escape Artist* is a kids' adventure yarn in the spirit of *Emile*



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and the *Detectives*. Griffin O'Neal stars as Danny Masters, a young magician trying to live up to the memory of his Harry Houdini-like father, who died in murky circumstances many years before. The film, co-scripted by *ET* writer Melissa Mathison, leaves many questions unanswered – it is never satisfactorily explained, for example, what happened to Danny's parents or why he has ended up with his uncle and aunt. But it's very engaging fare. Deschanel, better known as a cinematographer than a director, delights in demystifying the world of conjuring, magic and card tricks, and at the same time retains a childlike awe at the stunts magicians can pull. He also delights in exposing the corruption of City Hall types. In all, the charm atones for the film's occasional wobbliness.

One from the Heart was Zoetrope's *folie de grandeur*, a film that was a clunking failure at the box office but has grown in stature with the years. It's set in a Las Vegas which seems inspired as much by the mythical Land of Oz as by the 'real' city. Cinematographer Vittorio Storaro plays wondrous games with light, bathing the stylised studio sets in glowing reds and oranges, and the music of Tom Waits and Crystal Gayle adds to the sense of yearning that runs through the film. The story concerns a couple of blue-collar types whose relationship is creaking and who long for escape and adventure. Teri Garr's Frannie dresses shop windows; her partner Hank (Frederic Forrest) is a mechanic. He's a little overweight; she's a tiny bit dowdy. Coppola contrasts their ordinariness with the exoticism of the neon-lit world that surrounds them. There's a delightful performance from Raul Julia as a Latin-lover type who makes out he's a matinee idol/singer but turns out to be just another Vegas waiter. Equally memorable is Harry Dean Stanton as Hank's duplicitous best friend Moe, who has an absurd perm and fancies himself as the ultimate ladies man. You can see why the film failed – arguably it was too soft-centred and escapist for an adult audience, but at the same time had too much eroticism and too much darkness at its core to be suitable for kids.

Discs: Optimum has now been rebranded in the name of its parent company StudioCanal and continues to provide a British outlet for StudioCanal's vast library. The upside is that a wealth of titles is still being made available on DVD, though most releases tend to be on the basic side. Released separately, the Zoetrope films are handsomely presented, but there are none of the supplements you'd expect to find with such titles if they were released through a label like Criterion. (Also released this month is Coppola's director's cut of *The Outsiders*, reviewed on page 89.) (GM)

This month's releases reviewed by Geoff Andrew, Sergio Angelini, Geoff Brown, Michael Atkinson, Michael Brooke, Trevor Johnston, Geoffrey Macnab, Kim Newman, Nick Pinkerton, Kate Stables and Isabel Stevens

Blue Bloods – Season 1

Panda Productions/Paw in Your Face/CBS; US 2010-11; Paramount Home Entertainment/Region 2; 946 minutes; Certificate 15; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: deleted scenes, making-of, gag reel, featurettes

Programme: George Bush *père* once complained that the United States should be less like *The Simpsons* and more like *The Waltons*. *Blue Bloods* is probably a modern equivalent of the kind of patriarchal TV show he had in mind – not least because the family at its centre is named Reagan. Developed by husband-and-wife team Mitchell Burgess and Robin Green, writer-producer veterans of *The Sopranos*, this police procedural/domestic drama airs and resolves each episode's issues around the dinner table.

Donnie Wahlberg gets top billing as Danny Reagan, a tough New York Irish cop who likes nothing better than shoving the faces of recalcitrant bad guys down the nearest toilet pan, and who is the designated loose cannon in the law-enforcement 'family business'. His 'responsible' sister Erin (Bridget Moynahan) is an assistant DA, and baby brother Jamie (Will Estes) is a newly graduated beat cop. Tom Selleck's Francis is not only father to the brood but also a police commissioner – a man who exudes gravitas and self-reliance, and who's not above quoting Tolstoy or Raymond Chandler when he needs a *bon mot*. Meanwhile ornery grandpa Henry (Len Cariou) – himself an ex-police commissioner – begins all his sentences with "Back in the day..." The entire family is in mourning following the job-related death of Danny's other brother Joseph, a cop (of course) whose investigation into the secret Blue Templar society has now been taken up by Jamie; this provides the show with a slender arc which pays off conclusively in the season finale.

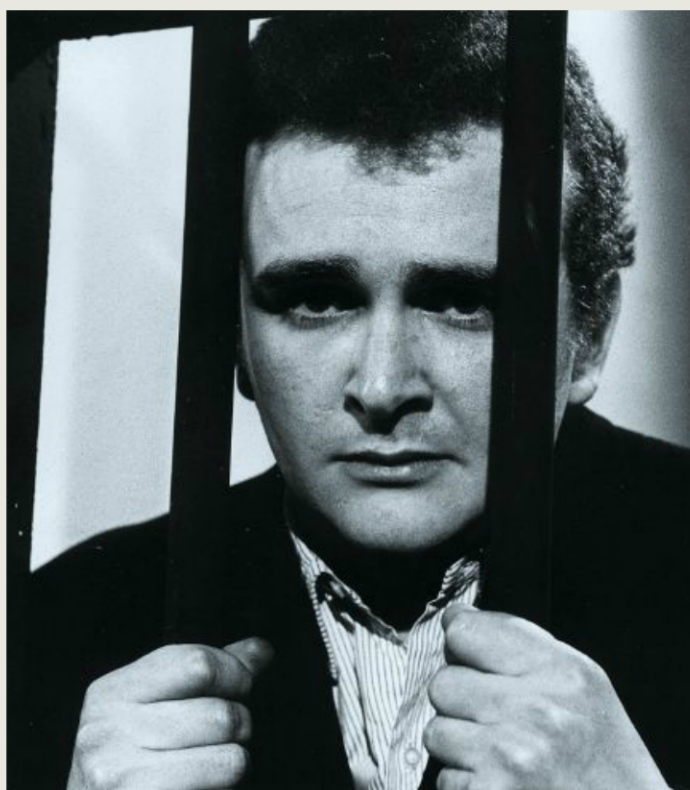
Recovering slowly from a particularly cliché-ridden pilot, the series takes a long time to find its feet (the supporting cast seem to change for each of the first dozen episodes, though Nick Turturro, who gets most of the good lines, is a fixture as Jamie's sergeant). It improves as it goes along, however, with most of the standout episodes – such as one set on Valentine's Day – courtesy of women writers, producers and directors.

Discs: Beautifully shot in HD, this set includes an hour or so of extras providing background on how the show was set up and cast. (SA)

Ken Loach at the BBC

BBC; UK 1965-77; 2 entertain/Region 2; 1,052 minutes; Certificate 15; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: audio commentary, Ken Loach interview, 'Housing Problems' short

Programme: Ken Loach stated last year that "television has now become the enemy of creativity" – implying a



Ken Loach at the BBC 'Three Clear Sundays' (1965) uses Brechtian ballads to chart the arrest, incarceration and execution of a naive street seller

belief that this hasn't always been the case. Having joined the BBC in 1964, Loach quickly graduated to directing the prestigious *Wednesday Play* and many of these dramas stand out in this six-disc set, which celebrates his work at the Corporation up to 1977, foregrounding his significant collaborations with producer Tony Garnett and writers Jim Allen and Barry Hines.

While some of the titles have long been available – *Cathy Come Home* (1966) is even being rereleased separately – others, especially Allen's Trotskyite miniseries *Days of Hope* (1975), detailing the radicalisation of a mining family between 1916 and 1926, have been long overdue on home video. The earliest of the *Wednesday Play* selections here is the trenchant *Three Clear Sundays* (1965), which despite the intriguing use of Brechtian ballads to chart the arrest, incarceration and execution of a naive street seller, clearly shows Loach's unease with the constrictions of taping drama in the studio. His trademark use of semi-documentary techniques – such as jump cuts, straight-to-camera speech and unattributed voiceover – works more successfully in the plays shot on 16mm and is predictably well in evidence in the films about

collectivism and industrial disputes, such as Allen's *The Big Flame* (1969) and *The Rank and File* (1971). But it also impresses in David Mercer's astringent play about schizophrenia *In Two Minds* (1967), the adaptation of Nell Dunn's book about abortion *Up the Junction* (1965) and Hines's Silver Jubilee tragicomedy *The Price of Coal* (1977). There are also some genuine surprises, such as *The End of Arthur's Marriage* (1965), with music by Stanley Myers ("Why talk when you can swing/Why work when you can scam").

One may or may not agree with Ken Loach's view of the parlous state of TV commissioning today – but just looking at the rich variety of work here it's easy to see why he might feel that we have not come as far as we could and should.

Discs: Image and sound, especially the 16mm monochrome of *The Big Flame* and *The Rank and File*, are generally impressive, though *Three Clear Sundays*, originated on video, looks very ropey indeed. Loach reminisces with reasonable clarity about the films in a new half-hour interview (although he does forget James MacTaggart's name at one point) and in an audio commentary for *Cathy Come Home* ported over from an earlier video release. (SA)



BFI STILL, POSTER AND DESIGN (G)

Through a mesh, darkly: Maya Deren's 'Meshes of the Afternoon' has been described as "sunshine noir"

Loving the afternoon

Sophie Mayer welcomes a study of Maya Deren's avant-garde classic

Meshes of the Afternoon

By John David Rhodes, BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, 128pp, £9.99, ISBN 9781844573776

"To do everything with nothing requires an artist," wrote John Garth in one of the first published reviews (in the San Francisco Argonaut) of Maya Deren's 1943 short film 'Meshes of the Afternoon'. Other reviewers seeing the film on Deren's coast-to-coast US touring programme in 1946 were less complimentary. As John David Rhodes notes in this BFI Film Classic, the two most celebrated American reviewers of the era – James Agee and Manny Farber – were unconvinced, with Farber issuing a particularly unpleasant description of the film as "Freudian-toned, lesbianish, freezing, arty, eclectic... and mainly concerned with sex". It's a verdict whose terms have been reclaimed as positive descriptors, first by the American avant-garde curator P. Adams Sitney, then by the US and UK feminist film movement, and now in the realm of artist's film and video – where Deren is regarded as a pioneer for her low/no budget filmmaking (she famously described 'Meshes' as made for "what Hollywood spends on lipstick") and alternative strategies for exhibition and distribution.

Rhodes follows the lead of the industrious and passionate editors of 'The Legend of Maya Deren', whose

recuperation of Deren's brief oeuvre and complex life story is reflected in the wealth of biographical material, both textual and visual, that this slim volume is able to present. His premise – that Deren's first film, co-created with her husband Alexander Hammid, is an aesthetic and ideological extension of the Los Angeles émigré socialist milieu in which they met – chimes with Renata Jackson's pioneering 2002 monograph 'The Modernist Poetics and Experimental Film Practice of Maya Deren', still the only full-length study of her cinematic and theoretical experiments (though curiously it's not cited by Rhodes).

Rhodes's study is, astonishingly, the first BFI Film Classic to treat American avant-garde cinema. Like Deren herself, Rhodes in a sense does everything with nothing, building 120 pages from the 14 slender minutes of a single short. He twice describes the image chains and techniques of the film in detail, interspersing these descriptions with a rehearsal of Deren's formative political and academic work on the East Coast. Rhodes's assembly of letters and interviews from the Deren archives and 'The Legend' enables him to suggest (although not fully elaborate on) a distinctive critical comprehension of the film's emergence from the European avant-garde beached in California and its

Astonishingly, this is the first BFI Film Classic to treat US avant-garde cinema

strained relationship with the Hollywood movie business, itself built by émigrés and – particularly in noir – influenced by European filmmakers fleeing the Nazis.

Rhodes uses this insight to expand on J. Hoberman's categorisation of 'Meshes' as a "sunshine noir", offering a commentary on Hollywood's treatment of women and domestic space "made around the corner from Barbara Stanwyck's place" (in her role as Phyllis Dietrichson in 'Double Indemnity'). This metacinemacity, for Rhodes, explains the "Meshes effect" on subsequent American avant-garde cinema. Feminist theorists' claims on Deren are seen, however, as a backhanded compliment, locking the film to its meditation on gender violence and female subjectivity.

In his final chapter Rhodes claims that 'Meshes' works so brilliantly because its symbolism and inventive use of editing propound the relationship between the particular instance and its universal significance that Deren had sought in modernist poetry. In this abstraction, he risks losing the profound, uncanny particularity of the film, which works specifically to take Deren's ideological and aesthetic explorations and crystallise them in the image.

He ends with a suggestive image-phrase borrowed from Deren's transcription of the film, which describes beautifully its visual and intellectual impact on cinema: "shadow of a girl appears." Rhodes's book is very much in this shadow – and the shadow of feminist critics such as Renata Jackson who have laboured to bring Deren's work to the attention it deserves.

Cinema: The Whole Story

Edited by Philip Kemp, Thames & Hudson, 576pp, £19.95, ISBN 9780500289471

Anyone who has been following Mark Cousins's *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* on More4 and feeling a desire to immerse themselves in a heavyweight history of the medium need look no further. As you'd expect from art publishers Thames & Hudson, *Cinema: The Whole Story* combines high production values and a generous selection of colour stills with a sensible price tag – the same amount you could spend on an unillustrated hardback novel. And it's not just the quality of the pictures that sets this apart from the dour single-volume histories of cinema we grew up with. Under the general editorship of Philip Kemp, *The Whole Story* has come up with an easy-to-navigate format that avoids a dry catalogue of names and dates, and uses the expertise of 25 writers (including some familiar names from these pages) rather than one sole author, who will inevitably have his (and it usually is his) hobby horses or areas of weakness in terms of national cinemas.

The book divides the history of cinema into six chronological periods (the 1930s and the 1960s are the only decades that get a whole section to themselves). Each decade is then divided into chapters, either by region or thematically, with a useful timeline to show how the movements interact. (Designer Nicole Kuderer deserves a namecheck too.) Each chapter then consists of a general intro and eye-catching illustrated spreads on one or two notable films, including stills from key scenes. So in the 1930s, 'Gangster Movies' is illustrated by *Little Caesar* and *The Public Enemy*. Inevitably, the editorial choices become more daring in the final section '1990 to Present', where the canon is still up for grabs. The interesting chapter on 'Postmillennial British Cinema', for instance, commendably chooses *My Summer of Love* as its defining example, and even finds room for a sidebar on how Pawel Pawlikowski's film differs from Helen Cross's source novel. This combination of breadth of scope and frame-by-frame detail is truly impressive, with much to offer both for the novice and the jaded aficionado. 🍷 **John Wrathall**

"Postmillennial": 'My Summer of Love'



100 Film Musicals

By Jim Hillier and Douglas Pye,
BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, 279pp, £12.99,
ISBN 9781844573783

My two-year-old nephew is currently entranced – consumed – by Dick Van Dyke's pole-thwacking antics in 'Me Ol' Bamboo'. He watches the rousing number from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* again and again, rapt, then spends hours by the wardrobe mirror, putting around a tall tube of cardboard and mumbling 'O' bamboo' under his breath. Previously impervious to movies, he has been hooked by the link between visual and bodily pleasure.

This chunky little handbook fudges the pleasure principle: Jim Hillier and Douglas Pye miss the sizzle of sheer exhilaration that musicals can provoke. If dogged, the choices are various and always interesting. Their 100 entries move from *The Jazz Singer* (1927) to the wholesome behemoth of *High School Musical* (2006), but cluster around the classic American musical in the middle decades of the last century – Pye writes about most of these, while Hillier largely pursues the musical through other countries (especially India, Britain and the arresting outcrop of modern French musicals), before pushing forward into dystopian anti-musicals like *Nashville* (1975) or *Dancer in the Dark* (2000).

Brilliantly gimcrack confections, musicals resist auteurist accounts. Several movies here are described as a "hybrid", often because so many creators are involved, and the authors pay generous tribute to choreographers and designers as well as directors. They



"Wonderfully sensual": Dorothy Dandridge with Harry Belafonte in 'Carmen Jones'

also note how a star's charisma can shape a film, admiring the "wonderfully provocative and sensual" Dorothy Dandridge in 1954's *Carmen Jones* (part of the "disreputable history" of African-American identity in Hollywood musicals) as much as Fred Astaire's grace or Gene Kelly's physicality.

The relationship between stage and screen musicals runs through the book. Where Hollywood frequently adapted stage successes (as the authors note, increasingly during the marmoreal 1950s and 60s, the genre's plush last hurrah), the commercial traffic is now reversed: *Mary Poppins*, *Chitty Chitty*

Bang Bang and *Footloose* have all been adapted for the stage, while of recent Broadway hits only *Mamma Mia!* has become a (cheerfully execrable) hit film.

The range of films across time, place and tone defies broad conclusions. A brisk introductory jaunt through critical writing on the genre begins with Richard Dyer's challenge in 1977 to account for both the "sensuous and affective appeal" of musicals and the ideological contradictions they embody. Wrangling couples are wedged into blissful duets; smiling hordes tap-dance over the anxieties of the Depression. That's entertainment!

Hillier includes a good dollop of Hindi musicals – as he notes, in Indian popular cinema "musical" is less a generic choice than a given, even for a film about separatism like *Dil Se...* (1998). 'Playback singing' has long been an unproblematic feature of Indian cinema, but American musicals draw much of their potency from the tension between the unrestrained artifice of lens and edit, and the real-time, real-place performance skills of song and dance.

Does this account for our discomfort when songs are dubbed? We don't expect action stars to perform their own stunts (and marvel when they do), but may feel cheated because Marni Nixon gives warbling voice to Audrey Hepburn's bushbaby allure (might this explain why the book omits *My Fair Lady*?). The camera may bend reality, gloriously, but we need truth from the performers' bodies.

This sputtering, stubborn authenticity recurs here, as we read about Barbra Streisand's disdain for lip-synch in *Funny Girl* (1968) or the full-body shots John Travolta demanded in *Saturday Night Fever* (1977). A singular entry describes D.A. Pennebaker's 1970 documentary on recording the Broadway cast album for Stephen Sondheim's *Company*. These are performances under pressure, sometimes faltering; at 4.30am, Elaine Stritch's furious rasp finally gives up as she yells at her own playback. But the next day she nails the number, skipping around the mike like a triumphant athlete, the thrill of performance coursing through her body. **David Jays**

Conversations with Clint: Paul Nelson's Lost Interviews with Clint Eastwood 1979-1983

Edited by Kevin Avery, Continuum, 288pp,
£12.99, ISBN 9781441165862

Out of nowhere comes a great book on the Clint Eastwood of 30 years ago, when, more than just a big star, he was a divisive symbol of American populist justice. Though he'd already directed excellent films by then, he was not yet institutionalised as an auteur, a process that would begin in earnest only after *Bird* (1988) and *White Hunter Black Heart* (1990). At the time of the interviews that make up this book, Eastwood as a director still belonged – to adopt Andrew Sarris's remark about Edgar G. Ulmer – "to unthinking audiences or specialists in mise-en-scène".

When he first approached Eastwood, Paul Nelson (a Sarris disciple of vast cinephilic erudition) was the record-review editor for *Rolling Stone*, which assigned him to do a cover story on the star. An author bio that appeared in the magazine in 1977 called Nelson "a thin, mysterious figure who rarely makes a deadline". He missed the one for the Eastwood story too, which was still unfinished when Nelson quit *Rolling Stone* in 1982. According to Kevin Avery, the editor of *Conversations with Clint*

(and author of the indispensable *Everything Is an Afterthought: The Life and Writings of Paul Nelson*), Nelson suffered from "writer's block in the bleakest sense". Fortunately, Nelson held on to the interview tapes, which surfaced after his death in 2006.

The interviews run from 1979, when Nelson visited the set of *Bronco Billy*, to 1983, after Eastwood invited him to an advance screening of *Sudden Impact*. A moment when Nelson remarks that *Rolling Stone* was treating him better since he became a freelancer is typical of the rapport between the two men. "I remember the same thing years ago being a contract player with a studio," Eastwood says. "Boy, as soon as you left they seemed more interested than when you were there." Men of different cultures, generations and earning power, Nelson and Eastwood each know where the other is coming from.

Nelson also knows that it's Eastwood's connection with his audience – the very element that caused some critics to reject him – that gives his work vitality. For Eastwood everything, including acting, comes back to the audience and the need to respect their intellect and feelings. "The basis of good



"Listen well": Eastwood in 'Bronco Billy'

acting is being able to receive well, being able to listen well, to respond well," as he puts it. "People who can't listen as actors are usually poor at it. Oh, they may be able to be showy and pound their head against the wall and transmit a great scene, but they can't work on the audience's inner feeling about them because the audience is listening *with* them, absorbing with

them." Eastwood's empathy with his audience emerges as a main theme throughout the book.

Though Eastwood says he doesn't think of his films as political, Nelson gets him to talk at length about his perceptions of contemporary American culture and the ideological role his films play within it. The discussion of *Sudden Impact* (which Nelson, provocatively, calls "a poem of violence") is especially rich, as Nelson probes the moral justification of the heroine's revenge-for-rape killings and "Dirty" Harry Callahan's decision to let her go free. "I don't know what justifies anything," Eastwood says, revealing a pragmatism – and a doubt – that are basic to his cinema.

As these interviews reveal, Eastwood knows what he is doing. That the critics haven't caught on doesn't appear to bother him (though Avery hints in a footnote that he was more perturbed by Pauline Kael's bad reviews than he admits). He's grateful for the attention of a congenial and intelligent *Rolling Stone* writer who knows his work. Their fluid, far-ranging conversation should have been put in a time capsule. Happily, it was. **Chris Fujiwara**



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Digital autopsy

To continue the discussion on digital projection that has recently taken place on these pages, I've just come back from the ICA where I watched *Post Mortem*, your film of the month (*S&S*, October). This was one of the worst experiences of digital projection I have ever had. The film was not shown on a digital cinema projector, but on a ceiling-mounted consumer unit which was badly set up (bad black level and vertical bars all across the image). To add insult to injury, the distributor Network Releasing did not provide the cinema with a 2K or HD Digital Cinema print, but with what was obviously a standard-definition source, whose quality was comparable to that of a DVD. Essentially you paid £10 to a ticket (which is more expensive than my local multiplex) to experience an image that is not only not cinema-worthy, but arguably worse than what most people get at home. I do not think the filmmakers intended their film to be seen this way.

Max Jacoby
By email

Who directed Judy

To Tim Lucas, who wrote: "From Vincente Minnelli's song-studded remake of 'A Star Is Born', with Judy Garland (1954)..." ('Rock Horror Show', *S&S*, October). Minnelli certainly directed his fair share of song-studded movies, was responsible for four remakes (*Madame Bovary*, *Kismet*, *Gigi* and *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*), and he and Garland were (for a short while) married to each other. But that version of *A Star Is Born* was directed by George Cukor.

Alan Maughan
By email

More than mores

Trevor Johnston's review of *Guilty of Romance* (*S&S*, October) is for the most part an accurate and incisive description of the movie, and I agree about the "fascinating music choices". I had also thought sometimes that director Sono

'Guilty of Romance'



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Broaden your horizons

For a magazine that proudly calls itself "The International Film Magazine", *Sight & Sound* has too much bias towards Britain, in my opinion. There is hardly an editorial where Nick James does not talk about the specifics of the British film industry, and while the London Film Festival gets the cover and an in-depth preview, more important film festivals get just a few lines months later. The more interesting if admittedly more riskily programmed Berlinale is regularly dismissed – not just in your magazine – by what I am by now tempted to call 'the Berlinale conspiracy'. But how many of the so-called highlights of the London Film Festival have been shown at other festivals before?

I understand that you are part of the BFI, but keep in mind that you have a lot of international readers as well, for whom England does not constitute the centre of the world. I myself am primarily interested in the films, and while I appreciate British cinema both from the past and the present, I couldn't care less about the situation of the UK Film Council or the UK box-office numbers.

Andreas Oetti
Salzburg, Austria

Sion "hammers away at the same idea long after we've got it". But if Sono can quote Corneau's *Tous les matins du monde* for an hour, and then quote Visconti's *Death in Venice* for a further half-hour, for Johnston to conclude that Sono's subject is "Japanese social and sexual mores" suggests that Sono has more hammering still to do.

Almost 90 years on from the first Japanese films to reach the West, how is it that we still interpret Japanese films as being about one country, in a way we rarely do for films with white actors?

Roger Macy
Turnbridge Wells

Tinker tailor writer

It would hardly be worth arguing the case that, for better or worse, *Sight & Sound* is wont to promote the auteur theory in its pages. However, something like bile rises when it seems an almost deliberate disrespect is being paid to the craft of screenwriting in your coverage. In his article on *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* ('To Catch a Spy', *S&S*, October), John Sutherland (wittingly or otherwise) denigrates Bridget O'Connor and Peter Straughan's work in adapting the novel for the screen when he forgives director Tomas Alfredson his plot "liberties", adding "in later stretches of narrative, Alfredson... skilfully thins down le Carré", and summing up: "This is as much an enrichment as an adaptation of the book Alfredson was given to remake."

Of course it's common for the director to be involved in script development



(and a given on a large studio picture, including the hiring and firing of writers to further his own interpretation of the material). But unless Sutherland is privy to detailed intel from a well-placed mole within this production, his assumptions and careless phrasing can only help perpetuate the ridiculous ignorance that "the director does it all."

Scott Johnston
Birmingham

A pan too far

I found *Melancholia* (*S&S*, October) very interesting, posing much food for thought. The opening sequence with Wagner's music was quite thrilling, evoking memories of 2001. But what is it with this handheld camera stuff? Why are so many directors so keen to make use of it? Can they not afford tripods any more? I found the first half of the film quite difficult to watch as the extreme fast panning and wobbling of the frame made me feel quite dizzy. I can understand the representation of manic-depressive urgency that came over as a result, but I do feel rather glad that the film was not showing in IMAX!

Christopher Bruce
Tenterden

The future of 3D

I want to express my gratitude to Ian Christie for his excellent article 'Clash of the Wonderlands' (*S&S*, November). It is refreshing and timely to see some serious and sensible debate on the topic of 3D. The new wave of digital 3D – in

terms of capture, post-production and exhibition – is still in its relative early stages, and while Hollywood seems to be doing its best to kill the goose that laid the golden egg with a raft of less than acceptable presentations, there are some truly amazing developments in technology that mean – as Christie points out – the best is certainly yet to come.

3D is a creative tool that is as good or bad as the artist wielding it. There are good and bad movies and there are good and bad 3D movies – it is just a shame that at the moment there are more of the latter. The cinema industry is committed to 3D, with more than 30,000 enabled screens worldwide. If the public can stick with the format and give the creatives more time to bring more amazing 3D to cinemas, the best really is yet to come.

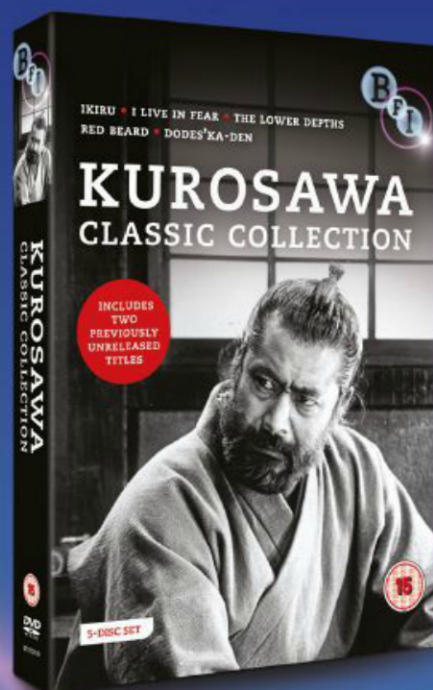
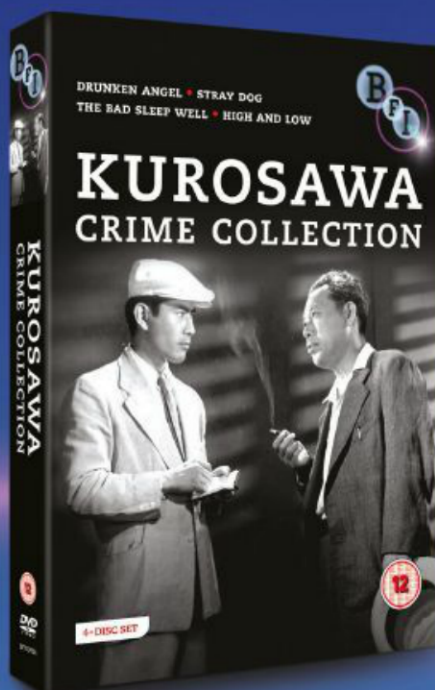
Adam MacDonald
London

Additions & corrections

November p.57 *Contagion*, Sanaa Lathan plays Aubrey Cheever (the credits stated Aubrey); p.62 *Hell and Back Again*, Cert 15, 88m 24s, 7,956 ft +0 frames; p.68 *Monte Carlo*, nationality is just USA; p.69 *Parked*, Cert 15, 94m 27s, 8,500 ft +0 frames; p.73 *Sleeping Beauty*, Cert 18, 101m 27s, 9,130 ft +8 frames; p.80 *Will*, Cert PG, 101m 57s, 9,175 ft +8 frames; p.80 *The Woman*, Cert 18, 101m 9s, 9,118 ft +8 frames; p.91 The book *Drew Struzan: Oeuvre* is 314 pages long, not 214 as printed.

October p.55 *Broken Lines*, Cert 15, 97m 9s, 8,743 ft +8 frames; p.66 *The Inbetweeners Movie*, aspect ratio is 1.85:1; p.69 *Mademoiselle Chambon*, Cert 12A, 101m 3s, 9,094 ft +15 frames; p.72 *Page One Inside the New York Times*, Cert 15, 91m 41s, 8,251 ft +8 frames; p.82 *You Instead*, aspect ratio is 1.85:1

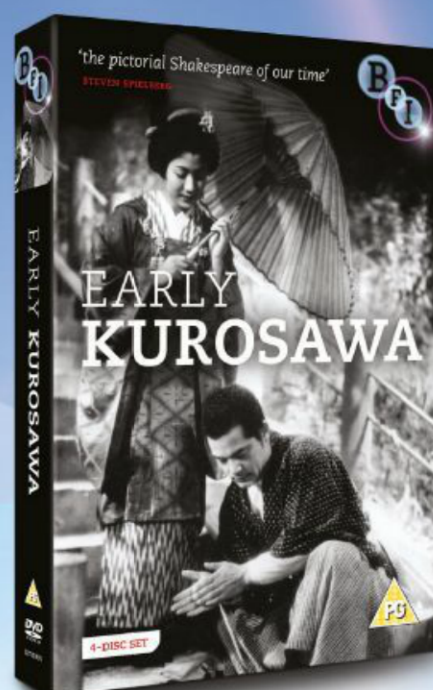
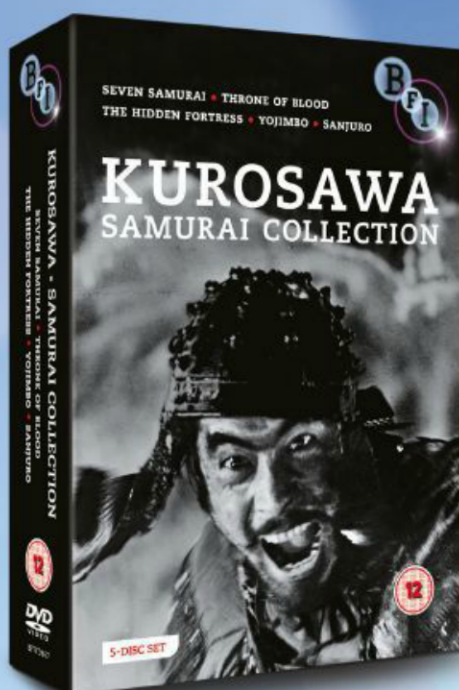
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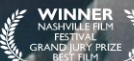
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